

Success in High-Need Schools Journal

Volume 1, #1

Theme: “Center Overview”

Introduction

This inaugural issue of *Success in High-Need Schools* reports findings from the *Center's* first year: stories of collaboration among ACI's 24 member colleges and universities, their K-12 school partners, and community colleges and businesses seeking to recruit, prepare and retain a diverse corps of excellent teachers for Illinois' high-need schools.

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ACI Mentor Online: Electronic Support for Beginning Teachers in High-Need Schools, by Mary J. Selke and Shelli Nafziger

Author Bios

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Abstract

The Associated Colleges of Illinois' (ACI) *Mentor Online* program was piloted in spring 2005 with online forums in classroom management and technology, mathematics, reading/literacy, and science. The program was implemented fully in fall 2005, when forums were added in the areas of bilingual/ESL learners, music, physical education, social science, and special education. This article provides a rationale for beginning teacher mentoring, profiles the developing research base on electronic mentoring, describes ACI's *Mentor Online* program, and summarizes results of the pilot semester.

Contrasting Approaches to Induction

Induction programs for beginning teachers have burgeoned since the early 1980s, when Hall (1982) began referring to the first three years of teaching as the induction phase. Three approaches have been noted: assistance induction, assessment induction, and standards-based induction (Odell & Huling, 2000).

Assessment induction focuses on evaluating the skills of beginning teachers as they develop into full-fledged professionals. Standards-based induction seeks to implement a set of national or state teaching standards specific to beginning teachers. Assistance induction, the most widely used method, focuses on providing orientation information, general support, and classroom guidance from mentors.

In summer 2001, representatives from ACI colleges and universities, in partnership with ACI staff, proposed a comprehensive assistance system. The project's design incorporated what two decades of research have taught us about the best practices in the field, the processes by which adults learn, and the potential impact of acculturation processes on both the efficacy of new teachers and their retention in the profession. Nine components were found to be critical to successful induction experiences that promote self-perceived efficacy and subsequent retention of beginning teachers: 1) carefully managed school settings; 2) well-prepared, willing mentors; 3) positive, tenacious beginning teachers; 4) supportive, involved principals; 5) reasonable teaching schedules; 6) multi-level resources for beginning teachers; 7) an established expectation for cross-cultural education; 8) on-going comprehensive induction program assessment; and 9) an overall school culture norm of professional efficacy (Ganser, 1998,1999; Gilbert, 2005; Moir & Gless, 2001; Quinn & Andrews, 2004). Mentors need to be carefully selected for their teaching expertise. They also should possess background in the theoretical knowledge and practical skills of mentoring and be committed to the professional role of mentor.

Induction programs for beginning teachers take these factors into account. They provide contextualized opportunities in professional development that are designed to advance a beginning teacher's knowledge and skills. Furthermore, comprehensive induction programs provide diverse components of support for beginning teachers. The stronger a beginning teacher's perceptions of support, the more likely he or she is to remain in teaching. For example, a landmark study of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater's teacher induction program (Varah, Theune, & Parker, 1986) found that 100% of the beginning teachers in the induction program remained in teaching the second year, compared to 83% of the control group. Only 25% of the control group expressed the intention to remain in teaching for more than five years, compared to 75% of the induction group.

Mentoring is one of the most critical components of any induction program. One study (Selke, 1992) of a sample of 121 beginning teachers from urban, suburban, and rural schools, found that only one of 39 beginning teachers who were assigned a trained mentor as part of an induction program left teaching after the first year. By contrast, one third of the nine beginning teachers who independently found their untrained mentors left the profession, while the two beginning teachers who had no mentors left at the end of the first year. The study also found that beginning teachers whose building principals were actively involved in their induction processes were more likely to remain in teaching. This finding was corroborated a decade later by Quinn and Andrews (2004) in a survey of 182 beginning teachers in a large, diverse school district.

As the field of beginning teacher induction has grown, and an increasing number of states offer or legislatively mandate programs, more recent large-scale studies continue to emphasize the benefits of induction programs. National reports by both teachers' unions (AFT, 2000; NEA, 2000) recognize induction programs as critical elements in supporting new teachers. These programs allow beginning teachers to reach higher levels of comfort and competence more quickly, increasing the likelihood they will remain in the teaching profession. On a regional level, a report from the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (Hare & Heap, 2001) confirms the benefits of induction for retaining teachers at schools in Midwest states. Bottom line: induction programs for beginning teachers have a strong, positive impact on the efficacy, competence, and retention of beginning teachers in the profession.

Mentor Online: An ACI Learning Community for Beginning Teachers

Colleges of education usually have limited opportunities to directly affect the experiences of their students following graduation. Nevertheless, mentoring and easy access to resources for beginning teachers -- two key components of successful induction experiences -- do fall within the purview of educational institutions. These two factors have become the keystone of ACI's comprehensive induction programs. The resulting context-specific, multi-level resource approach, now in its fourth year of operation, emphasizes: 1) meeting the individual needs of beginning teachers; 2) facilitating access to multi-level resources; and 3) supporting a collaborative commitment of PK-12 professionals and ACI college/university members to an extended learning community that especially empowers beginning teachers at high-need schools.

The induction support that many beginning teachers from ACI schools receive from their schools or districts ranges from limited single-component support (i.e., a one-day orientation at the beginning of the initial employment year) to well-designed and carefully implemented systems of comprehensive support. One-to-one support from an assigned mentor is a frequent component of school induction programs (Odell & Huling, 2000).

The term "mentor" is derived from the ancient Greek poem, the *Odyssey*, in which Homer writes about a wise old sea captain, Mentor. When he goes on an extended voyage, Odysseus entrusts his son Telemachus, to Mentor. The contemporary use of "mentor" describes a wide variety of formalized and spontaneous relationships in school and business communities that involve a "supportive relationship between an older, more experienced person and a younger protégé who serves to initiate her into a new profession, organization, or stage in life" (O'Neill, 2000, p.4).

These programs are not without problems, however. If all an induction program has to offer is mentoring, it can fall short of a beginning teacher's needs. Individualized mentor-mentee matches may not be compatible for any number of reasons, ranging from personality conflicts to insufficient training of the mentor. Mentors may be assigned to mentees arbitrarily. Contact may be limited due to the schedule demands and time pressures inherent in a teacher's typical workday, or because the mentor's classroom may be too far away. Even in the friendliest mentor-mentee relationships, beginning teachers may be guarded about disclosing their problems and frustrations to a respected colleague whom they see on a daily basis. The value of electronic mentoring is that it sidesteps many of these issues, providing beginning teachers with a wide repertoire of techniques and ideas far beyond what any one mentor can offer.

Background Perspectives on Electronic Monitoring

Formalized mentoring programs exploded onto the educational scene in the 1980's (Feiman-Nemser, 1996). Since then, society has begun to rely more heavily on communication that involves technology, especially communication via the Internet. In the recent past, virtual mentoring, also known as "E-mentoring," "telementoring," and "online mentoring," (Kirk & Olinger, 2003, p. 13) has evolved. Offering support to a less experienced person from a more experienced person for joint benefit of learning, it has the same theoretical purpose as traditional mentoring, but without the element of face-to-face contact. Telementoring is considered an "adaptation of mentoring, using telecommunication technology as a means to establish and maintain relationships between participants" (Price & Chen, 2003, p. 107) and has been "conceptualized as the online or electronic version of mentoring" (Chan, 2000, p. 85). Typically, the communication between mentor and mentee in a telementoring relationship involves the use of email, but it also may include numerous other technologies, including web sites that display asynchronous and synchronous dialogue formats.

Telementoring can help overcome obstacles of time and place, allowing the relationship between a mentor and mentee to happen anytime and anywhere. A strength of telementoring is that it allows online contact between those who might not otherwise be able to meet due to geographical distance (Guy, 2002). In addition, a telementoring environment offers easy retrieval of resources and quality information. In the best case scenario, telementoring can help create a community of sharing in which "all parties involved mediate questions, answers, and discussions" (Price & Chen, 2003, p.108).

In addition to the myriad potential benefits, there are five potential challenges associated with telementoring (Ensher et al, 2003). These are: 1) the likelihood of miscommunication; 2) slower development of relationships online than face to face; 3) required competency in written communication and technical skills; 4) possibility of computer malfunctions; and 5) issues of privacy and confidentiality (p. 276). Due to the absence of traditional nonverbal communication characteristics in an online environment, "a mentor or mentee who lacks the ability to use good e-etiquette or express [himself or herself] effectively in writing may find online mentoring particularly difficult" (Ensher, Heun, & Blanchard, 2003, p. 278).

If a mentor and mentee have technical difficulty using electronic communication, the relationship is likely to be plagued with aggravation and misunderstanding. The intended recipient of a message may question the reliability and promptness of the online relationship if a response to a question, pressing concern, or emotional experience is not immediately forthcoming. Finally and most important, online communication in a telementoring relationship underscores ethical considerations related to confidentiality because of the increased chance that an electronic message may be read by others not associated with the mentoring relationship.

While online mentoring in education has proliferated in the past couple years, the topic is just beginning to be addressed, and related systems are just beginning to be described and evaluated in professional literature (Knouse, 2001; Switzer, 2005). The purpose of this article is to provide a historical context for the practices of E-mentoring beginning teachers and to describe the ACI's *Mentor Online* program.

Intended Outcomes of ACI's *Mentor Online*

The professional learning community of ACI's *Mentor Online* is composed of p-12 master teachers and ACI member institution faculty members who are committed to providing information and support for beginning teachers. They seek to provide personal interaction via the fastest, most appropriate technology, linking beginning teachers to easily accessible, experienced mentors who are knowledgeable about their content-area. The overriding goal of the program is to provide an immediate-access, online venue offering assistance in the following areas: 1) best practices regarding classroom management, lesson planning, lesson delivery, and teaching-related issues, such as preparing for conferences, assessing student performance, and working with parents and other school community members; 2) advice on actual or anticipated challenges; 3) shared news of teaching-related successes; and 4) information and helpful tips to beginning teachers. Proper telementoring can assist beginning teachers in reaching higher levels of competence and confidence faster. It also provides professional development opportunities for beginning and experienced teachers, while implementing program components that contribute to a culture of professional efficacy for everyone involved.

ACI's *Mentor Online* is one component of the *Teacher Induction Academy*, a comprehensive support program for beginning teachers, which provides a two-day expenses-paid summer retreat and seminar for new teachers who are alumni of ACI institutions and are entering high-need school districts. It also provides a series of follow-up seminars on Friday evenings throughout the year, which feature break-out sessions designed to meet the needs most frequently identified by beginning teachers. One of the many strengths of ACI's induction program is that it spans the critical first three years of teaching, while offering an option for a fourth year of induction. First-year teachers attend break-out sessions on classroom management; second-year teachers on assessment; third-year teachers on differentiated instruction; and fourth-year teachers on implementing computer-based technology in the classroom. *Mentor Online* is accessible to all beginning teachers and to teachers in ACI-sponsored alternative certification programs. In the future, it is anticipated that *Mentor Online* will be available to other beginning teachers across the state of Illinois, although the program will continue to emphasize beginning teachers from ACI member institutions.

ACI's *Mentor Online* may be accessed by going directly to the web site at: <http://www.aciteachers.org>. Guests to the web site may view ACI-sponsored announcements and upcoming events for beginning teachers in high-need schools and can read but not participate in the *Mentor Online* forums. Teachers who register may post questions or discussion on the forums.

When the program was inaugurated in late January 2005, it had pilot discussion forums in classroom management/technology, mathematics, reading/literacy, and science. Classroom management and reading/literacy were chosen because they were relevant to all beginning teachers. Mathematics and science were selected because these are areas in which retention of beginning teachers is particularly critical. As the program moved into full implementation, additional forums have been added in the areas of bilingual education, physical education/health, music, social science, and special education.

Each forum is guided by a moderator who: 1) checks email and the web site several times per week; 2) works with mentors to assure daily coverage of the forum site; and 3) interacts with ACI coordinators for content/mentoring, technology, and program management. Mentors, on the other hand: 1) check email and the web site several times a

week; 2) provide information and responses; and 3) direct participants to resources and repertoire-building ideas. Both mentors and coordinators answer posts and work with the moderator to meet the needs of beginning teachers.

Prospective mentors and moderators are recommended by ACI and leaders of ACI member institutions, and they are invited to participate on the basis of extensive experience, including: 1) teaching in their respective content areas; 2) working with and mentoring pre-service and beginning teachers; 3) teaching and/or mentoring beginning teachers in diverse settings; 4) exhibiting comfort and competence with basic electronic communication; and 5) displaying an apparent passionate enthusiasm for teaching, teacher education, career-long professional development, and committed service to the teaching profession. Many of the moderators and some of the mentors have terminal degrees in their field and, perhaps more important, all bring practical expertise acquired through ongoing dedicated practice. In addition, all receive a small grant-funded stipend for their work with ACI's *Mentor Online*.

Mentors and moderators participate in collaborative face-to-face meetings at the beginning and end of the academic year (or more often, if desired). They share E-mentoring strategies that have proven effective, brainstorm solutions to actual or anticipated challenges, and spend time together in a computer lab gaining hands-on experience with new web site functions. Mentors and moderators also have their own password-protected forum where they can continue their conversations about the E-mentoring process throughout the year. The forum also is moderated by a content/mentor coordinator -- currently a faculty member at an ACI institution, who facilitates and encourages the work of mentors and moderators, views web site functions from a research perspective, and works with ACI staff assigned to *Mentor Online*, including an ACI consultant who oversees technical needs related to the web site.

One of the challenges mentors encountered during the pilot phase -- already born out by the fledgling literature base on E-mentoring (Enshur et al, 2003) -- is that of developing a relationship or learning community online. Mentees have the option of contacting a moderator directly when an issue arises that would not be appropriate for an open web-based forum; in addition, members are directed to maintain confidentiality when posting messages about students or other school-related individuals. The open chat room-like format has the advantages of semi-anonymity and immediate accessibility. With the addition of more mentors and more participants in the post-pilot phase, moderators and mentors will be working to achieve larger and more lively forums.

Posted topics in the pilot phase ranged from reactions to potentially inflammatory articles in mainstream news magazines to reflections on Socrates' quote, "the unexamined life is not worth living." The Classroom Management and Technology Forums offered classroom management tips, instruction in working with pc and video cables, and in selecting Internet services. In the Mathematics Forum, beginning teachers asked about everything from facilitating student work with graphing calculators to acquiring a repertoire of methods to teach and coach multiplication skills. The Reading/Literacy Forum -- one of the most active discussions -- focused on finding books to interest and challenge students, while assisting teachers in differentiating instruction for classes with wide ranges of reading levels. The Science Forum dealt with helping students overcome misconceptions about science, tapping into their natural curiosity about science via inductive and deductive processes, and finding books on physics. The resulting mix of topics and discussion has just begun to reveal the potential for informative communication that can take place within an online learning community of mentors and beginning teachers.

In the words of Kirk and Olinger (2003, p.10), "physical barriers of space and time are not permitted to stand in the way of a quality learning relationship...virtual mentoring enables mentoring relationships to be established and flourish among people who are in opposite corners of the world" or in opposite corners of the state. As we move into the 2005-2006 academic year, mentors and moderators are looking forward to expanding our collective ability to provide high-quality support for beginning colleagues, especially colleagues in high-need schools.

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Feeling at Home: Linking New Teachers to High-Need Communities, *by Dawn Abt-Perkins, Steven Rosswurm, and Shelley Sherman*

Author Bios

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Abstract

History and teacher education faculty members at Lake Forest College are collaborating in a teacher education orientation program that introduces candidates to the high-need Waukegan community—socially, culturally, and historically—prior to their observation and practicum experience in the Waukegan schools. This direct “hands on” experience prepares students for the contextual realities of Waukegan students and the Waukegan school community. The evidence to date documents that candidates decide to teach in high-need schools because of this inspiring experience, while becoming more enthusiastic and committed in their choice of a teaching career. Before candidates begin observation and practicum experience in the Waukegan, IL schools, Lake Forest College provides them with an orientation program that introduces the social, cultural and historical context of this high-need Waukegan community.

Why Teach?

We spent the past few weeks advising new students about Lake Forest College's teacher education program. As we did so, we continued to be struck by how many of these smart, energetic young people are willing to consider careers in teaching, given the current national press (cf. Hartocolis, 2005; Simon, 2005) and the social, political, and economic climate of our profession.

Our students are joined by others who continue to populate teacher education programs across the country. In fact, according to recent national surveys, more than half of new, young professionals said they would consider teaching careers (Farkas et al, 2000). More surprising is the reason they cite: the “ability to make a difference in the lives of at-risk kids.” (Farkas et.al, p.17). Despite the challenges, students still want to become teachers for reasons of “effective altruism”—the sense that they could make a difference.

In the initial meetings we have with our students, we ask them why they have chosen to teach. Many respond that they want to be like a favorite teacher from elementary or high school and would love to teach in a school district like the one from which they graduated. Most of the students at Lake Forest College have attended well-resourced suburban schools and imagine themselves teaching in similar schools someday. Our students conform to the national profile of prospective teachers, most of whom are white, middle class and interested in teaching jobs in communities they know and understand (National Education Association, 2001; National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teaching, 2000). As young people who have grown up in the social, economic and linguistic mainstream, they have a set of prejudices and assumptions about children and families who live in communities of

poverty and cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity (Howard, 1999; Rios, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2001; Obidah and Teel, 2001).

According to national surveys, teachers believe their training has not adequately prepared them for the classroom -- especially in high-need districts -- and many want more time in classrooms and communities (Farkas et al., 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001).

At Lake Forest College, we require that teacher education candidates in all of our elementary and secondary programs complete a 10-week, half-day, five-day-a week internship in the spring semester of their junior year. They are assigned to Waukegan public school classrooms with a mentor teacher. When we describe this part of our program to prospective teacher candidates, students have two reactions: excitement and trepidation.

Students are excited by the prospect of having significant teaching responsibilities and experience prior to student teaching. In fact, many teacher candidates dream of being in charge of a classroom, and most feel that the sooner they can do this, the better. However, the panic sets in when they hear their internship will be completed in Waukegan. If they are from the surrounding area, they know Waukegan as the place where their parents told them not to go. If they are not well acquainted with the area, they soon will acquire negative impressions from others. Their fears are connected to a lack of self-confidence: What do I have to offer these kids? What do I know about teaching them?

Meeting the Challenge Head On

As part of our work with ACI's *Center for Success in High-Need Schools*, we decided to address directly the fears, prejudices, and concerns of teacher candidates by redesigning our internship program. While we have been conducting this internship experience in Waukegan for more than a decade, we had not designed it in a way that supports teacher candidates for a high-need school experience. We had referred to Waukegan as "multicultural" and "multilingual" and had depended on commercial and traditional multicultural education materials to prepare our students for Waukegan classrooms. We did not address directly the pressures of poverty (Haberman, 1995; Reed-Victor and Stronge, 2001); new immigrant children and families (Crandall et al, 2001; Igoa, 1995); low reading and math scores; and the impact of school funding on their students' classrooms, mentor teachers and, eventually, on their role as teachers in this community (Cole, 1995; Neito, 2003). While we had shared some general demographic information about Waukegan with our students, we had not discussed the impact of these factors on the school and the particular classroom challenges they would face. Moreover, we certainly had not addressed the racial, socioeconomic, and ethnic assumptions our students carried with them from their backgrounds into the classrooms of Waukegan.

We began by getting specific. Instead of referring to Waukegan as if it were like all other "multicultural" or "under-resourced" schools, we decided to introduce our students to Waukegan's specific history and resources as a community. We needed to show our students what was unique about Waukegan and have them articulate their assumptions about the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions for teaching there. Having done this, we engaged our students in critical reflection about these assumptions throughout the course of the semester. We made it clear that their challenge was to investigate changes in their perspective as they worked with children, teachers, and families in Waukegan schools.

We also changed what we taught our students as necessary for successful instructional design in Waukegan schools. We reorganized our curriculum to require students to use community resources in their instruction and the ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic identities of the students in their classrooms (Au, 1993; Carbo and Kapinus, 1995) as a basis for instructional design. We directly discussed motivation and made explicit the connection between motivation, culturally responsive instruction, and student engagement and achievement (Ginsberg, 2004). We also required our

students to implement differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 1999), ESL instructional strategies for all learners (Faltis, 1997; Rigg and Allen, 1989), and strategic literacy learning (Schoenbach et al, 1999; Buehl, 2001) in the design and delivery of their lessons

We transformed the ways in which we taught the course, moving away from generalized principles of instructional design toward principles that fit the particular needs of Waukegan as a high-need school district with a wide range of students who have various levels of literacy experiences, but lack the background knowledge and prerequisite skills necessary for easy success in school subjects. Instead of focusing on *what* to learn, these students needed a great deal of modeling on *how* to learn in school contexts. They lacked models for school literacy and academic success at home, and often had double-identities -- split affiliations with America and another country they viewed as home. We knew that teacher candidates with a liberal arts background could be an invaluable resource if they understood their role as model learners and viewed instructional design as coaching students toward valuing and succeeding in school.

At the same time, we recognized that we were working with teacher education candidates who were entering classrooms as "teachers" for the first time. For most of them, working in schools with real students was anxiety-provoking, in and of itself. Adding "high need" to the equation was certainly daunting to these college juniors who, as previously noted, come mostly from white, middle-class communities with relatively homogeneous school populations. Therefore, we had to be keenly aware of the need to construct developmentally appropriate and productive clinical experiences for novices (cf. Knowles and Cole, 1996; King et al., 1997). We also had to be mindful continually of framing goals directed to where our students were situated, not only regarding their limited past experiences with high-need students, but also in terms of their knowledge about teaching and learning itself. We asked ourselves a series of questions: How much can we expect of our students, especially about implementing culturally responsive practices? What kinds of resources should we provide? And, equally important, how could we convince mentor teachers to let our students take the instructional risks necessary to learn how to be culturally responsive, while also providing them with the confidence-building support they needed at the appropriate times?

We decided that our students could not understand their students without coming to know the community in which they would be teaching. Past cohorts had driven to Waukegan in the morning and come home at noon without any real contact with the community's culture. To be sure, a few attended parent-teacher conferences or back-to-school nights. Time pressures, class schedules, and, of course, anxiety about being in a neighborhood that looked quite different from their own made it unlikely that they would venture out into the community and get even a glimpse of their students' real lives.

We also knew that they would not encounter easily recognizable evidence of community-connectedness in the schools or instruction of their mentor teachers. Yes, schools are part of a community's culture. But, as pressures to meet standards and raise test scores have increased, often schools make less of an effort to reflect their students' cultures. Standardized curricular approaches, often required of teachers, do not offer opportunities for connections to student lives and communities. In fact, the notion that cultural connections may enhance achievement is not part of mainstream conversations about raising student achievement. And yet, it was precisely this notion that we believed could anchor the work we would do with our students in high-need schools. If motivation to learn stemmed directly from the personal meanings attached to content and learning experiences, as asserted earlier, our students needed to learn to understand their students' lives, families and community.

We decided to begin the semester quite differently from past semesters. We would spend two weeks with our students, both in the campus classroom in the community itself, reflecting on what they would be bringing to the classrooms and how their knowledge of the community and its diverse, rich resources could inform their practice in powerful ways. We began with an internal resource of our own, a professor of history at Lake Forest College, Steven

Rosswurm, whose historical and cultural knowledge of Waukegan is extensive and who also lives in Waukegan. Rosswurm would be our students' first connection to Waukegan, a primary resource who would illuminate a world that was foreign and even intimidating to our students. With Rosswurm, we began to plan a "preparation phase" for the internship. We wanted it to be relevant and situationally specific to the field experience in Waukegan.

We Begin

We work with both elementary and secondary teacher candidates in the Waukegan internship. The elementary candidates are placed in first- and second-grade classrooms, and the secondary candidates are placed in middle schools, matched to classrooms according to their content-certification programs.

We decided to keep the two groups together for a number of days, meeting with them for several hours each morning, before we worked with them as two separate cohorts. We did this to create a sense of community, the same kind we hope they will try to create and sustain once they are in their own classrooms. We also wanted to emphasize the importance of seeing students in classrooms as growing human beings situated at different places along a developmental continuum and supported by a cohesive group of teachers with common goals and commitments. We started by having each of the six elementary teacher candidates and nine secondary candidates present what we had asked them to prepare during their winter break: a visual presentation that shared with the group what they believed they were bringing to their internship experience in Waukegan. Many students focused on personal characteristics and dispositions -- enthusiasm and creativity, for example -- and a commitment to diverse students. Some expressed a lack of confidence as they entered a community unlike that of their own white, middle-class families. There was a nervous energy, a palpable sense of anticipation, and, simultaneously, an eagerness, as well as an understandable hesitation about entering an unfamiliar environment.

We followed the presentations with a morning of document analysis set up at four "stations." Newspaper clippings, school report cards, and demographic information about Waukegan were placed on tables around the room. A different question was posed for the students at the four stations: 1) What has been the effect of Mexican immigration in Waukegan and Waukegan schools? 2) What is it like to live in Waukegan ? 3) Where does Waukegan stand in terms of test scores, and how are test scores used to portray the schools? 4) What are Waukegan school principals' and administrators' plans for addressing low graduation rates and achievement scores? And how are they addressing their problems? As they analyzed the documents, students were asked to keep these questions in mind: 1) What came as a surprise? 2) What challenged your current thinking? 3) What do you now understand or question that you did not understand or question before? And, most important: 4) What will you have to work on to be welcomed as a teacher in this community?

All of this was designed to make our students part of a conversation about the particular community in which they would be teaching. We wanted them to recognize how they could bring the community into the classroom and the classroom into the community. In other words, we wanted them to see the culture of the community as a resource rather than as something to leave behind as they entered the school building each morning.

We also were putting them in a better position to understand what they would be seeing on the bus tour scheduled for the next day. Rosswurm had planned a day-long bus tour of Waukegan that would help our students understand its historical context including immigration patterns of 19th and 20th centuries. We visited the sites of abandoned industrial complexes that had provided jobs for Waukegan residents and ultimately polluted its lakefront, making the land and water toxic for fish and humans. Churches and working-class communal institutions, built by German, Lithuanian, and Finnish immigrants, were included, too, in Rosswurm's carefully crafted itinerary. We stopped to have coffee at "Coffee Grounds," a downtown coffeehouse owned and operated by a Waukegan African-American family. We had lunch at a Mexican restaurant, "Huitzuquena," also owned and operated by Waukegan residents. Rosswurm

provided the rich narrative to accompany the diverse images of the community's past and present, helping to contextualize the experiences our students would be having in their classrooms. We wanted students to see schools as part of an organic whole rather than as institutions isolated from the community's culture and values.

Indeed, we wanted them to realize their potential as change agents (cf. Price & Valli, 2005) who could awaken their students' appreciation of their own unique capacities, interests, and cultural backgrounds. By enriching our students' understanding of the Waukegan community, we also were hoping to broaden the ways in which they could motivate students by making their curriculum culturally relevant, personally meaningful, and locally contextualized. The bus tour provided a comfortable collective entry point for our teacher education candidates into the community where they would teach. We also required our candidates to visit the community during the weekend, when they could see families together at local sporting events, church services, and shopping centers. Some went to the Mexican supermarkets, others to soccer games. This was the Waukegan teachers rarely see, unless they live in the community themselves.

They came back on Monday eager to share their experiences, what they had learned, and what they felt they still needed to know. But the strangeness clearly was beginning to disappear; they were beginning to feel the community's rhythm and its energy. Strangeness and anxiety were being replaced by a desire to get to know their students and the community more deeply. They were curious about what values their students would bring and what were their hopes, aspirations, and fears. They were starting to recognize the importance of culturally relevant teaching practices in ways that textbook examples could not provide.

The payoffs from this preparation phase were beginning to become apparent. Although our students were not yet feeling at home, they were starting to feel at ease. Sherman asked the elementary cohort to comment on what they saw on the tour. Here are some of their responses:

- "The community is happy as it is, and it does embrace education."
- "I think that the family unit will be very important...therefore, I expect to hear a lot of input from parents on how they think their children are faring."
- "The love between family members ...that the community is working at improving education -- that is the main goal. and [sic] I will be able to take part in that."
- "that improving education is a goal."
- Waukegan is.... "a very diverse city that has a great deal of hidden history to it."
- "It is unique because of its history and current situation. I found it to be diverse, but there are still communities within the community."
- "A little depressing. Thinking about where it came from and where it is now. But also hopeful. A unique community fully [sic] of diversity, racism, and hope. Everyone is there to achieve something better in their lives."

When Sherman asked what troubled them the most, they said:

- "Seeing the conditions of the homes -- it made me wonder if the outside of the homes reflected the family conditions."
- "The condition of the community. It made me wonder what the kids do outside school and what resources they have at home...;"
- "Hearing from Professor Rosswurm to 'not go down this street alone' and in general to be in pairs -- is that dangerous?"

- “The children walking alone to school, barely dressed for the cold. Seeing this led me to question the community and its culture...”

We then brought together a panel of Waukegan teachers who were alumni or had worked with us in other programs or served as mentor teachers to our interns. We asked them to address the question: Why choose to teach in Waukegan? They told powerful stories about lives they had changed, families who were grateful, and a community that needed them. They spoke of caring and hope and the possibility of change. They also spoke of pressures -- test scores, new programs, and the constant change that is a given in Waukegan schools. They discussed being effective -- the importance of being known and relied upon by students, colleagues, and administrators as part of positive reforms. Our students were in awe of these teachers' energy and commitment.

We continued the two-week orientation period, building upon the experiences of the bus tour and the weekend excursions. We read texts about culturally responsive teaching and differentiated instruction. At the end of the orientation period, we directed our students to return to the question they had addressed in their initial presentations: “What Do I Bring to Waukegan?” They also were asked to consider the challenges and unique opportunities about teaching in Waukegan and how they could use the community's resources and history in their teaching. Their responses showed that the experiences of the two-week orientation period had significant impact on their understanding of themselves and Waukegan.

Here are some of the reflections they shared:

- “When I begin teaching in Waukegan, I will take advantage of the abundance of resources in the community so that I can create an environment in the classroom that is culturally sensitive and will promote high achievement for students.”
- “In order to successfully prepare and implement an action plan and set goals for the fieldwork experience, it is vitally important for me to critically reflect and note how my beliefs and understandings of multicultural education have changed.”
- “Throughout my internship, I will work hard to achieve my goals by constantly and actively reflecting on my actions and building my readiness to teach in a multicultural classroom.”
- “Going into the surrounding community can help every teacher better understand where his or her students are coming from in terms of values and beliefs and choose more culturally sensitive materials to use in the classroom. I think that experiences like this can enrich my understanding of the students' community.”

These papers demonstrated our students' strong commitments to the *idea* of culturally responsive instruction, the *ideal* of community connectedness, and the *concept* of cultural identity; however, they had no resources, models or tangible ways to address questions such as: How would I teach differently in Waukegan? What difference does the community make in instructional design and student motivation?

Students were anxiously asking, “How do I do this?” We thought they were better prepared and informed than past cohorts had been, but they needed guidance to invent appropriate instruction. This was neither the way they were taught nor the way they had observed teaching and learning in other courses. They were hungry for models and ideas that would work.

We discussed ways that the interns could begin to make connections to their students' lives and bring cultural and community connections into the classroom. The elementary interns read about ways to use culturally relevant texts (Freeman & Freeman, 2004) in their read-alouds and started doing research to identify titles. Sherman encouraged them to use environmental print (cf. Hamner, 2002) from the community as a resource for reading instruction. She

also introduced her students to family message journals (Wollman-Bonilla, 2000) as a way to bridge the school-home divide and engage children in authentic literacy experiences. Abt-Perkins demonstrated ways of constructing culturally relevant lessons across the curriculum such as building lessons around issues of cultural identity in poetry and through culturally relevant memoirs. She also showed how to use primary documents and community maps and statistics as resources, and challenged interns to personalize their assignments and make sure they created opportunities to express cultural identity in each assignment. We showed videos of teachers using differentiated instruction with diverse student populations. Once they knew what these lessons could look like, students were able to invent their own.

As the next ten weeks unfolded, we certainly shared the same kinds of joyful moments as well as the typical growing pains that were characteristic of past cohorts. Like those before them, they both bonded with students and became frustrated with them for not cooperating during lessons that had taken hours to prepare. They were inspired by the commitment of mentor teachers, but also disappointed when they saw lackluster instruction. And finally they were both exhausted from grading papers late into the night and exhilarated during a student's "aha" moment.

But there were differences. Interns were having their students inquire and invent much more than in previous cohorts. The products their students created all helped them to communicate a value or a part of their lives or their identities. Projects ranged from memoir books to poem/CD collections to surveys on community heroes to neighborhood maps. Waukegan students created, presented and performed in ways that were not evident in instruction in previous cohorts. Personal identities were celebrated. Our interns really got to know their students and vice versa. Community resources created a context for personalization, sharing and relationship-building, unlike what we had seen in earlier cohorts of interns with their students.

We revised their final presentation assignment to refer to the beginning presentation by asking: What do you know now that you did not know then? Our students were making connections to the Waukegan community and to their students' lives in ways that were deliberate and focused. They saw the value of building relationships through the use of language and by sharing personal life experiences and interests. They recognized they were from different backgrounds than their students and that it was important not to minimize these differences. They tried to create learning experiences that allowed for a comfort zone for sharing cultural perspectives: the family message journals, cultural poetry lessons, community environmental-print projects, mathematical inquiry, language connections, primary documents, and literature selections. They saw that their students were engaged and they began to value school or academic learning as a way to understand and be themselves. They understood that it was "not about what students don't have, but recognizing the value in what they bring."

According to one intern, this was "especially evident in recognizing the interpretive stance that students have when encountering text, literature, ideas." What was coming into clear focus was that their students' perspectives were different and rich and brought a way of knowing the world that was substantive and useful in academic contexts.

We Ended

Our team, which paired a history professor with two education professors, challenged each other to think through the best way to reach Waukegan kids without relying on the conceptual structures, language and the belief systems of our respective disciplines. Rosswurm was uneasy with educational jargon and suspicious of the value of carefully designed lesson plans. He forced us to speak about teaching and learning in ways that everyone would understand—community members, other intellectuals on campus, parents. All of this clarified our goals and enhanced our understanding of how we could provide better support for our students. We spoke of motivation instead of engagement factors; we talked about learning opportunities rather than lesson objectives; we discussed instructional materials in terms of their cultural and community authenticity rather than exclusively concentrating on reading level or developmental

appropriateness. Those of us in education helped Rosswurm to see the instructional possibilities and limitations in the primary documents and community artifacts he had found in his research and suggested our interns use. Our weekly staff meetings became workshops in which we challenged each other to continually define and refine our understanding of cultural responsiveness. We discussed the importance of community-centeredness in instructional design and of appropriate expectations for intern teachers. In the end, we ended up with different definitions. Some of us are more comfortable still thinking in terms of inclusiveness while others take a more socially reconstructionist stance (Sleeter, 1995, 1992). But the conversations themselves have helped us set standards for our own work and our students' work that are much more grounded in the realities of teaching and learning in Waukegan.

The conversation continues as we plan for next semester and a new group of interns. How can we be clearer from the outset about what we expect? How can we help our students to understand family and community structure better? How can we better involve mentor teachers and community members in this process? How can we better document the differences this approach is making in student learning outcomes?

Most conversations about involving liberal arts and science faculty members in teacher education revolve around responsibilities in the development of teacher knowledge—content knowledge vs. pedagogical knowledge. These conversations usually end with the arts and sciences faculty absolving themselves of responsibility for what actually happens in student teaching lessons. They leave the work of transforming content into instruction to the teacher educators. Having Rosswurm on our team led all of us to take a “public intellectual” view of teacher education. We were not simply educating teachers but community agents. To do that we needed to all share a common investment in helping a struggling community better raise its children. How could we help? How could we offer hope? How could we build on a strong and long community history of serving poor immigrant children? We needed to speak of and view teacher education in its broadest context as contributing to positive social change. That meant communicating, learning from and valuing each other as teacher educators, no matter what department we were from. Rosswurm saw the intellectual value of instructional design. We started to take an inquiry stance in our own teaching as teacher educators, learning along the way with our interns and guided about this community and its people by our colleague from the History Department.

Next semester, we are inviting other Lake Forest College professors from the math, chemistry, and biology departments to join us. The chemists and biologist are interested in Waukegan as a site of inquiry into environmental science. The math professor who will be joining us is spending part of his sabbatical year this year researching mathematics instructional reform for diverse students, hoping to bring that knowledge back with him and to our team. Before we conclude this project four years from now, we hope to include faculty in all of the academic departments in this conversation, sharing our commitment to Waukegan as a community, helping others to recognize it as a site of intellectual work, and firmly situating it as a place that will prepare the kind of teachers who will not only feel at home, but who will also understand what it really takes to make a difference.

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I-SPED Core Values, *by Candace Baker*

Author Bio

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Abstract

The Associated Colleges of Illinois (ACI) established the *Illinois Special Education Collaborative (I-SPED)* in 2003 in response to a critical shortage of special education teachers in Illinois, especially in the Chicago area. ACI created *I-SPED* to encourage ACI members to partner with high-need schools to offer accelerated special education certification programs. Initial funding was provided by a 2003 grant from the U.S. Department of Education's (USDOE) Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education (FIPSE). The initiative subsequently received support under ACI's USDOE's *Transition to Teaching* grant.

Why I-SPED?

Special education long has been a field plagued by teacher shortages, but the increasing identification of students requiring special education services has made the situation particularly dire. In 2003, the U.S. Department of Education reported a shortage of 53,000 special education teachers. An equally distressing development is that about 40% of the special educators working in full-time positions are not fully certified (Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2005). *I-SPED* is designed to foster collaboration among special educators to increase ACI members' capacity to address the teacher shortage. The goals are: enlarging the pool of teacher candidates; encouraging minority enrollment; and developing accelerated program models leading to multi-categorical certification.

The shortage of special educators has spawned many attempts to offer programs in teacher preparation to accelerate the certification process. There is a body of research suggesting that alternative preparation can be effective for general educators (Qu & Becker, 2003; Zeichner & Schulte, 2001). However, there are few such studies focusing on special education preparation programs. It is more difficult to analyze the data on special education programs because these programs differ greatly in design. Some states, such as Illinois, do not allow alternative preparation programs for special educators. Other states do offer emergency certification requiring minimal content and pedagogical experience. Rosenberg and Sindelar (2005) stated it best when they wrote, "teacher preparation may best be represented as a continuum along which the point where alternative ends and standard begins is uncertain" (p. 118). The authors state that, although the literature base is limited, there is evidence in support of alternative routes to special education certification when the following principles are in place: 1) Programs grow from collaboration among institutions of higher education (IHEs) and local education authorities (LEAs); 2) programs are strengthened by policy support from state education authorities (SEAs); 3) programs are substantial in length with a diverse set of experiences; and 4) qualified and prepared mentors are available to support program candidates.

ACI's *Transition to Teaching* Program is designed to support alternative and accelerated routes to certification with an initial focus on math, science, and bilingual education. This focus was extended to leverage the expertise of member colleges and universities to develop a replicable, accelerated model of special education preparation, which would be fully accredited by the state of Illinois. ACI's FIPSE grant provided support for development and dissemination of such a model.

Saint Xavier University (SXU) in Chicago was selected as the FIPSE lead institution for *I-SPED* because of its early approval to offer a multi-categorical special education preparation program and its eagerness to partner with surrounding P-12 school districts. SXU had a strong partnership with Chicago Public Schools (CPS) in place, serving as one of the CPS First Class preparation programs for special education teachers.

The multi-categorical special education program at SXU was developed in 2001 in response to the state's new Learning Behavior Specialist I (LBSI) certification structure. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) moved to the multi-categorical program framework as a result of a federal court directive that CPS teachers were not prepared to teach students receiving special education services in a "Least Restrictive Environment" (LRE). The court case also found the ISBE was contributing to noncompliance with the LRE mandate because its certification structure focused on disability-specific certification (Weitzman Soltman & Moore, 2000). The LRE mandate requires that students receive special education services based on their educational needs rather than their disability, yet Illinois teachers were in preparation programs focusing on disability categories. As a result, because of a special education teacher's disability certification, students were segregated not only from nondisabled peers, but also from other students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) whose disability category was different. The reimbursement system for special education services developed by ISBE complicated the problem by creating incentives to place students in more restrictive placements. The final ruling in the case directed the state to modify its system of certifying special and general education teachers.

Saint Xavier University previously offered a master's degree program for special education preparation for learning disabilities only. When the state changed the certification structure to a multi-categorical model, SXU redesigned its program. Rather than requiring candidates to take multiple, single-category characteristics and methods courses as did many other institutions, new coursework was developed to meet the multi-categorical standards. SXU's was one of the first multi-categorical programs in the state designed specifically for the LBSI certification structure. The state approved the program in 2002.

Faculty from SXU worked collaboratively with other ACI member faculty to develop an accelerated model of special education teacher preparation that was based on the SXU multi-categorical program, an initiative that resulted in the FIPSE proposal to fund *I-SPED*. The ACI model incorporated a cohort teacher component into the preparation model. Preparing candidates who work in schools during their preparation program not only answers the schools' need for more special education personnel, but also adds value to the teacher preparation program. Delivering teacher preparation coursework while the candidate is working in a classroom helps the candidate "integrate inquiry, instructional theory, and practical classroom applications" (Prater & Sileo, 2002 paragraph 5). The teacher candidates benefit from opportunities that allow them to experience and reflect on pedagogy rather than "discuss" or "role-play" what they would do if they were in a classroom. They also benefit from the reinforcement they receive from watching students learn and progress as a result of their instruction. It is the close relationship of field experience and coursework that provides such opportunities (Epanchin & Colucci, 2002). A strong LEA partnership is essential when developing a model of teacher preparation that integrates coursework with classroom application. Developing such a partnership will result in a shared college-school vision and understanding of the role of each institution in the preparation of the candidate (Prater & Sileo, 2002, Rosenberg & Sindelar 2005).

FIPSE funding enabled *I-SPED* to recruit a cohort of candidates sponsored by CPS, with Saint Xavier offering the program as lead *I-SPED* institution. During spring 2005, the first *I-SPED* cohort of candidates began their teacher preparation program at SXU while assigned to co-teaching positions in CPS. Simultaneously, the FIPSE grant supported activities to disseminate the *I-SPED* model to other ACI member institutions through *I-SPED* monthly meetings, newsletters, and special consultations between SXU and ACI members interested in developing programs based on the

I-SPED model. McKendree College in Lebanon, IL, was the first member institution to request such assistance and subsequently used the *I-SPED* model to develop a program that ISBE is expected to approve in November 2005.

In the process of dissemination, *I-SPED* articulated certain core values to assure the program's adherence to the research-based design of the model special education program developed for ACI member institutions. The following discussion aligns the *I-SPED* core values with research findings in the professional literature on teacher preparation.

Accelerated Graduate Program

The *I-SPED* model is a master's degree program that candidates complete in two years. One reason the candidates can be placed in teaching roles while completing the program is that they already have a bachelor's degree, which allows them to be hired as substitute teachers. There is evidence that the *I-SPED* model will attract more "culturally and linguistically diverse teachers" (Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2005 p.118). Rosenberg and Sindelar also contend that graduate programs of this type appear to be effective in attracting minorities to work in urban areas. Thus, the *I-SPED* model may counter the historical trend of overrepresentation of teachers who are of European descent and address the need for a more diverse teaching force in urban areas (Epanchin & Colucci, 2002).

Multi-Categorical Program

The SXU master's degree program in multi-categorical special education was by faculty who understood the nature of a multi-categorical approach versus a categorical approach. In seeking to implement the least restrictive environment principle of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) -- the federal special education law -- schools are moving toward a more inclusive model of service delivery. In so doing, children with a variety of disability types may be enrolled in one general education classroom environment, while students with various categories of disabilities who require more intensive placements may be grouped together into one segregated environment. The special education teacher must provide services to children of varying disability types, as well as services to general educators in the form of accommodations and/or modifications to general education curricula. For special education teacher preparation to be effective for these two types of classroom settings, there are five high priority areas (Fisher, Frey, and Thousand, 2003): 1) collaborative teaming and teaching; 2) curricular and instructional modifications and accommodations; 3) personal supports; 4) assistive technology; and 5) positive behavioral supports (p. 46). None of these areas are dependent on disability-specific knowledge and skills. As Fisher et al argue, "disability-of-the-week courses are giving way to in-depth studies of systems of supports and characteristics of the educational needs of all students" (p. 48).

The SXU model was developed from the perspective that effective special educators must know how to teach core subjects such as reading, math, writing, and other general education areas. The coursework is weighted in favor of effective teaching strategies that transcend disability category and are applicable to all students who require special education services.

Supporting New Teachers

There is a growing body of research indicating the positive aspects of mentoring and induction programs for new teachers. As a result, states have implemented induction programs with a mentoring component for their new teachers (Darling Hammond, 2000). Mentoring is important for first year teachers, but is essential for candidates in cohort teacher preparation programs (Andrews et al, 2003; Dieker et al, 2003). Rosenberg and Sindelar (2005) identify building-based mentor support as an indicator of an effective alternate route program. The professional literature also suggests that university supervisors are needed for successful internship preparation programs and that a strong partnership between the IHE and the LEA is critical (Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2005; Andrews et al, 2003; Epanchin & Colucci, 2002; Prater, M. & Sileo, T. 2002). The benefits of mentoring and induction programs are so compelling that some theorists suggest increasing field experiences to add value to traditional teacher preparation programs. Cochran-

Smith (2005) has concluded that “many goals of teacher preparation are best met in the intersections of universities, schools, and communities” (p. 13). She also has noted the value of connecting learning experiences to instructional design, data-based decision making, and classroom management delivered within the context of P-12 schools.

In addition to mentoring, other areas of support for skill acquisition needed by special education interns and new teachers include collaboration, technology, legal requirements, classroom management, accommodations, complex teaching strategies, and positive behavior supports (Andrews et al, 2003; Fisher et al, 2003; Whitaker, 2003). Classroom management and technology skills are consistently cited in the teacher preparation literature, although they are not unique to special education teachers. The *I-SPED* Collaborative model of special education teacher preparation addresses all the previous skill needs within the coursework and field-based placement experiences of the candidates.

Collaboration among ACI members in partnership with LEAs has been central to the *I-SPED* model from its inception. Each participating LEA hosts a beginning cohort of teacher candidates by placing the candidates in co-teaching roles with credentialed special education teachers. Candidates take university coursework while co-teaching, which allows them to observe theory in practice and then apply theory under the supervision of qualified teachers. As candidates complete more coursework, the LEA moves them into teaching roles with more responsibility. For example, to cite the CPS' beginning teacher orientation literature:

“You'll work with your mentor teacher to develop classroom strategies and strengthen your teaching skills through reflective exercises, workshops and seminar sessions with other program participants. At this time you will also begin taking your graduate level education courses necessary for your teacher certification. These sessions will continue through the summer to prepare you to teach in your very own classroom” (CPS website, 2005).

This model of preparation, presents teacher candidates with opportunities for collaboration with mentors throughout the program.

As an Illinois State Board of Education-approved program, the coursework and field experiences also must address the Illinois Core Technology Standards for teacher preparation. Technology standards are embedded in each course that candidates take. Initial courses require candidates to email reports as attachments, develop Power Point presentations for different classes, and use server software such as Turnitin, Blackboard, and LiveText to develop lesson plans with objectives tied to technology for student use. The LEAs support candidates by having computers available in the field-based placements.

As a field experience for the special education foundations course, candidates are required to tour and interview staff members at a center for independent living for disabled persons. During this experience candidates observe accommodations for people with disabilities that enable them to function independently in a work environment. There are many forms of assistive technology for candidates to see, and they have the added benefit of talking with people who use the technology. During the interview they also learn of assistive technology that may be available for their students.

The foundations course also introduces candidates to the legal requirements for special education service delivery. The course textbook is a special education law book. The candidates are introduced to the elements of the IDEA through the historical litigation leading to the legislation. They also learn about post-legislation litigation that further defines the IDEA principles. As candidates engage in IEP meetings in their field-based placement, the principles learned in the foundations course are reinforced.

Skills for classroom management are embedded throughout the coursework, as is the case for most special education teacher preparation models. However, the *I-SPED* model uniquely allows candidates to fuse theory with practice on a daily basis. In addition to this theory-to-practice model, candidates also benefit from ACI's *Teacher Induction Academy* for first-year teachers, which focuses on classroom management principles. Candidates attend these workshops in addition to their *I-SPED* coursework.

The next courses in the program introduce candidates to adaptations and accommodations for access to the general education curriculum. The field experiences required for these courses are applied in the candidate's field-based placement. Candidates immediately implement adaptations and accommodations within their placement responsibilities. They also bring relevant questions and problems from their classroom experiences back to the university instructor for inquiry-based problem solving. Candidates research the professional literature regarding these issues and discuss their findings with their candidate colleagues.

Near the end of their program, candidates reach the capstone methods course, which introduces them to complex teaching strategies. Although these teaching strategies are found in all special education teacher preparation programs, the opportunity to apply teaching strategies immediately and repetitively is unique to the *I-SPED* model. Candidates are required to use research-based strategies for course assignments. Once candidates use a research-based strategy successfully with students, they are likely to repeat the strategy with other students. As strategies are used repeatedly, they become part of candidates' instructional repertoires. At this point, the *I-SPED* model also improves on traditional programs by offering ACI's *Teacher Induction Academy* focusing on assessment and differentiated instruction, as candidates complete their special education coursework.

Beyond initial certification coursework, the *I-SPED* model devotes two courses to behavior management. In response to LEAs' calls for candidates to develop stronger classroom management skills, a finding consistently echoed in the teacher preparation professional literature, the *I-SPED* model was designed to offer two additional courses that would enable candidates to complete the master's degree. These courses were developed from theory and research findings in Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to enable candidates to gain deeper theoretical understanding of behavior management applied to schools, classrooms and individuals.

In summary, the *I-SPED* model was developed from both current general research in the field of teacher preparation and studies focused particularly on special education. The model extends its research-based approach to methodologies for special education service delivery. Because the model is accelerated, designed especially for teachers desiring special education certification, and features extensive mentoring and classroom experience, it not only will reduce special education teacher shortages in Illinois, but produce effective special educators, as well. Further research is needed to assess the efficacy of the model in also leading to improved student learning outcomes.

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Linking Lessons from Experience to Practice, *by Anne Deeter and Jan Fitzsimmons*

Author Bios

Jan Fitzsimmons currently serves both as Director of ACI's *Center for Success in High-Need Schools* and as Instructor and Program Administrator for North Central College's Junior/Senior Scholars Program. She has developed an urban education internship at North Central College; served on a task force and co-chaired a symposium on P-16+ service learning; and is Curriculum Director and Campus Coordinator for ACI's *College Readiness Program*. Holding a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Chicago, Fitzsimmons leads program development for ACI's *Center for Success in High-Need Schools*, including curriculum design for ACI's *Teacher Induction Academy*, *Inner-City Practicum*, and *Diversity at the Blackboard* initiatives.

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Abstract

The notion that experience is a powerful teacher is not new. Field studies over the years have repeatedly underscored the importance of student teaching and clinical experiences in preparing teachers. But what specific experiences should teacher candidates have and why? This study examines the perceptions of pre-service candidates before and after a rigorous eight-week summer project with students from high-poverty schools. It finds that the fieldwork had a significant impact in changing and/or strengthening their career aspirations for working in hard-to-staff schools. After a rigorous, eight-week summer project with students from high-poverty schools, pre-service candidates may be more inclined to work in hard-to-staff schools.

Focus on Hard-to-Staff Schools

Asked what experiences teacher candidates should have in teacher preparation programs, Steven Tozer (2005), a professor at the College of Education at the University of Illinois-Chicago, replies, "It depends on what experiences we want them to have when they leave." This is not a trivial answer, for teaching experiences in Illinois schools vary significantly, even within a 50-mile radius. Teachers at New Trier High School, in affluent Winnetka, will have a far different experience than will teachers at Collins High School, in Chicago. Both will have a different experience from teachers in the rural Manteno district some 50 miles south of Collins. Our concern is primarily with those teachers who will work in under-resourced schools and communities.

With a K-12 population of 2.2 million children, Illinois schools educate nearly 800,000 low income students, a number equal to twice the combined populations of Rockford, Decatur, Springfield, and Elgin. Not surprisingly, the need for teachers is greatest at the schools that these students attend (ISBE, 2003). As Learning Point Associates (2005) puts it, "there is growing recognition that overall teacher quality is unsatisfactory in America today -- and hard-to-staff schools get the short end of a short stick."

There are not only difficulties getting teacher candidates to work in hard-to-staff schools (Levin and Quinn, 2003), but once they are there, they are almost twice as likely to leave in the first year of teaching than are their peers in low

poverty schools. Ingersoll (2004) notes, “Annual teacher turnover is 22% in high poverty urban schools compared to 12.8 % in low poverty schools. Clearly, if we want teacher candidates to succeed and stay in these schools, they need different experiences than their peers who are preparing to work in more affluent suburban schools.

A Differentiated Experience

While there are 4,273 public schools in the state of Illinois (ISBE, Quick Stats, 2004), the schools that need teachers most are the 1200+ hard-to-staff schools with 50% or more students eligible for free and reduced lunches. What differentiated experiences might we provide to prepare candidates for these schools? During the past three years, the Associated Colleges of Illinois (ACI) has offered *Inner-City Practicum*, an eight-week immersion experience that puts a learning community of teacher candidates together with students from two high-poverty communities. ACI's *Inner-City Practicum* is hosted by North Central College (NCC) Junior/ Senior Scholars, a 17-year-old college readiness program serving more than 200 students from Chicago's North Lawndale neighborhood and East Aurora, IL. The experience provides a summer session that prepares prospective candidates for the unique challenges and rewards of urban education by having them actually operate an academic day camp for poor, minority and first generation youth -- the Junior/Senior Scholars. This program takes learning from the classroom to the real world, increasing the opportunity to learn by doing, while providing a service to meet a real community need.

ACI lays the groundwork prior to the summer experience. Participation of junior and senior education majors and minors is solicited from ACI's 24 member colleges. The candidates are interviewed after submitting a handwritten application, which includes a personal statement of interest. A corps of candidates is selected to complete *Inner-City Practicum* based on the quality of their interviews, their desire to work as a team, and the pool of talent and expertise that best complements the needs of those attending the day camp.

Once selected, the candidates complete a pre-interview to collect baseline data. Then they begin their training. Candidates learn about the students who make up the Junior/Senior Scholars by meeting with them on campus and visiting the communities where the Junior/ Senior Scholar students live. They form book groups to read case studies of remarkable teachers who have made a difference, and they spend time thinking and talking about what instruction at their grade level will look like. Among the books with the greatest impact are: *Inside Mrs. B's Classroom*; *There Are No Shortcuts Here*; *Educating Esme*; *The Excellent 11*; and *Freedom Writers*. Then the candidates write lesson plans and design and set up their classrooms. Pre-service candidates develop and use active learning strategies as they collaborate with their cohort peers, college faculty, teachers from the students' home schools and the children's parents.

Throughout the summer, candidates are coached by experienced teachers who are graduate students in educational leadership programs. Candidates meet with their coaches weekly, and the coaches follow the candidates into the classroom to provide feedback on classroom environment, including organization, management and instruction. Each week, time is allotted for candidates to reflect on and conceptualize their evolving understanding of effective action in high-need schools and to explore solutions to real problems that arise during the camp.

During the summer camp, candidates meet parents and begin working with the students. At the elementary and middle school levels, candidates' experience includes engaging students in themed reading and writing, mathematics, and science, as well as swimming and recreation activities. They also manage breakfast, lunch, outdoor education, field trips, parent newsletters, parent orientations, and special events, including “Battle of the Books,” “Forensics for Kids,” and family visit days. At the high school level, candidates' experience includes navigating meal times, field trips, and a variety of special events and parent communications, as well as coordinating and coaching students in internships. They also create learning communities of high school students who produce individual college portfolios that include a rigorous reading and writing component. Each pre-service candidate also prepares a Learning Summary for each of his

students noting special achievements and accomplishments of the summer. To summarize, the summer experience ensures that each candidate has “real world” responsibilities including the opportunity to:

- design and teach lesson plans;
- implement best practices for engaging all students and vary instruction to meet individual needs;
- monitor, record, and report student progress;
- communicate regularly and effectively with students, parents, colleagues, administrators, and school personnel; and
- create a safe, orderly, and nurturing environment.

These responsibilities were designed to help the students learn through experience and understand the connections and disconnections with traditional school coursework.

Evaluation Goals and Methodology

Evaluation of the summer experiences, sought to assess the extent to which candidates had gained an understanding of/appreciation for:

- critical issues in urban education;
- teaching practices for narrowing the achievement gap;
- diversity and multiculturalism;
- service, activism and leadership skills;
- the importance of sharing their learning, their challenges, and their successes with peers; and
- how participation in a learning community can strengthen their own teaching and improve student learning.

In addition we explored how the experience impacted candidates' career choices.

Each year, we use an individual interview process to gather pre-experience perceptions, preferences, and confidence levels of pre-service candidates selected to participate in the *Inner-City Practicum*. During the interview, candidates describe their preference for a future teaching setting (i.e. urban, suburban, rural, international, or other) and what motivates them to choose that setting. They are asked to reflect on their anticipated challenges and assets as they enter the *Practicum* experience. Because the *Practicum* experience is designed to demystify the urban, high-need school setting, interviewers ask candidates to identify critical issues facing high-need schools and to describe the students they are likely to encounter. Candidates also rate their pre-experience confidence level along each of the critical *Inner-City Practicum* skill development objectives:

- designing lesson plans;
- monitoring student academic progress;
- developing a rapport with students;
- establishing one's self as a teacher;
- implementing a curriculum and communicating with parents;
- creating a nurturing environment;
- understanding and appreciating diverse cultures and environments; and
- identifying critical issues in urban education.
- learning from mistakes.
- collaborating with others.

Following ACI's *Inner-City Practicum*, another individual interview is conducted. Candidates are asked again about their future preference for a teaching setting, and, in particular, to describe how the *Practicum* experience impacted this preference. They explore their thoughts about teaching, growth, and development throughout *Inner-City Practicum*.

Candidates are asked to identify which of their skills they believe showed the greatest improvement and what they might do differently were they to start *Inner-City Practicum* all over again. Suggestions for future *Practicum* experiences also are gathered. The pre- and post-interview data are transcribed, and summary themes are identified among the responses.

Pre-Service Student Outcomes: Impact of ACI's Inner City Practicum

Across all three years of the *Inner-City Practicum* experience, interviews reveal an increase in the confidence and enthusiasm of the pre-service education majors.

In 2003, 18 pre-service candidates participated in the *Inner-City Practicum* experience.

Most were Caucasian (94%) and female (83%). Almost all had college-educated parents, and only one candidate was a first-generation college student. Sixty-one percent had a close relative who worked as a teacher. Most of the pre-service candidates entered the experience highly confident about their teaching skills. In comparing pre- and post-teaching preferences, teacher location preference changed significantly after the practicum experience. Those interested in teaching in an urban environment grew significantly after the practicum experience: from 26% pre-practicum to 47% post-practicum. Similarly, those preferring the suburban environment decreased: from 58% pre-practicum to only 30% post-practicum.

In 2004, the individual interviews pre- and post- *Inner-City Practicum* revealed a change in the perceptions of inner-city school and its candidates. Each of the 22 candidates started with a desire to improve his or her teaching skills and experience and to learn classroom methods in a hands-on manner. More than 25% of the candidates said they hoped to learn specifically about the inner-city, high-need environment. Others were looking for "exposure to a new setting."

Reactions to the experience were highly positive, even if the experience revealed skills that needed improvement, or candidates still had lessons to learn. Candidates overwhelmingly confirmed their interest in the teaching profession, even amid these challenges and "growth experiences." The *Practicum* experience had an impact on the education candidates' teaching preference. Fifty-seven percent began the *Practicum* with an interest in teaching in an urban environment; yet post-interviews revealed that 76% plan to pursue an urban position. Fourteen percent remain interested in a suburban school district, and, while 4% (post- *Practicum*) were interested in a rural setting, they hoped for a high-need rural school district. The graph below illustrates this impact. Note that the 76% interested in urban settings are divided between those who 1) came into the *Practicum* interested in an urban setting and had this preference strengthened or confirmed, and 2) those who were somewhat or not interested but now prefer an urban setting.

In 2005, candidate participation in the *Practicum* increased to 27 candidates compared with 22 the previous year. Pre- and post- *Practicum* interviews revealed a significant change in the confidence and enthusiasm of the pre-service education majors. All of the candidates believe they understand the high-need urban environment much better after the experience. As a result, the post-interviews revealed significant changes in the teaching preferences of the candidates. When asked before the practicum, only 27% of the candidates were already interested in or committed to teaching in a high-need, urban environment. After the experience, however, that number more than doubled, with 64% of the candidates now interested in or committed to teaching in an urban environment. Those interested in a suburban school declined, from 27% pre-practicum to only 8% post- *Practicum*. The graph below illustrates this movement.

To summarize, all candidates in all three years noted a better understanding of the urban, high-need school. Specifically, the interviews suggest four themes in the way candidates perceive themselves to be changed as a result of the *Practicum* experience:

- new or renewed preference for teaching in a high-need, urban school;
- sense of confidence in their teaching skills;
- movement from classroom theory to classroom practice; and
- heightened sense of enthusiasm for making a difference in the lives of the children they teach.

Change in Teaching Preference

The post-interviews consistently revealed changes in the teaching preferences of the pre-service candidates. When asked before the 2005 *Inner-City Practicum*, only 27% of the candidates already were interested in or committed to teaching in a high-need, urban environment. After the practicum experience, however, this preference more than doubled, with 64% of the candidates now interested in or committed to the urban setting. Those interested in a suburban school declined: from 27% pre-practicum to only 8% post-practicum. One candidate exemplified this change, stating how her preference had “really changed... I just wanted to stay in Naperville (suburban), but there were so many barriers (for me) that were broken down, it's unbelievable.” Many candidates from each of the three years credited their *Practicum* experience with dispelling some of their misperceptions about the urban school setting. They admit to their own naiveté and lack of real knowledge about high-need schools. For example, one 2005 candidate said, “I've become more open-minded about what it means to teach in an urban environment. It's not all gangs and drugs (that's what I thought before this). These kids are sweeter than most, and they have such a thirst to learn.”

For some who came into the *Practicum* with an interest in the urban setting, the *Practicum* experience served to heighten or affirm their choices. A typical candidate said, “This made me want to go teach (there) even more. I was so happy every day. I can't wait to student teach.”

Intentions to teach in the urban setting increased post- *Practicum* each year: by 21% in 2003, 19% in 2004, and 37% in 2005. Those changing their preference to the urban setting most often originally had preferred the suburban or rural school setting.

New Sense of Confidence in Teaching Skills

The post-practicum interviews revealed increased levels of confidence in teaching skills among the pre-service candidates. For most, the *Practicum* served to build the “success experiences” among them, adding to their sense of confidence and their anticipation of their career. As one participant said, “It (the *Practicum*) shows me that I want to be a teacher even more. I never thought I could find a place in urban education but I did. I've learned to be a better teacher, and it will make my student teaching easier.” Another student said, “When I came here, I was unsure about teaching, but I know now that I can do it. I am much, much more confident.” Others focused on the observed improvement in their skills, noting specific methods and the flexibility to adjust when one method or plan was not working as expected. Most agreed with the candidate who said, “It's a great stepping stone from my previous clinical work to being completely on my own. I learned to acclimate to different ages and different methods.”

Movement from Classroom Theory to Practice

The pre-service candidates also recognized the key role the *Practicum* played in putting their classroom theory into practice. Each year, the candidates echoed this theme, “It [the *Practicum*] goes so much more beyond the content. It's interacting with kids and establishing relationships and rapport and getting the classroom going so well that content can be explored.” According to one candidate, “I think every teacher should have to do this. You learn things that you can't learn in a classroom. I learned so much because I had my own classroom! You can read about it and learn about

it, but this was the real thing!” Specifically, classroom management and lesson planning topped the list each year for the skills noted as most improved through the experience. Candidates cited countless examples of building rapport with the students and creating a better understanding of classroom management.

Enthusiasm for Making a Difference in the Lives of Children

Candidates reflected on their shift in thinking about urban, high-need schools. Most often, this shift included their sense of being able to make a greater difference in an urban community with fewer resources than those available in a more affluent suburban district. Such was the case with these candidates, who said: “I’m so excited. I know I can make an impact here.” “We joked that this was a student teaching boot camp. I came out...pumped to student teach, and I learned so much about it!” “I feel like I am going to be able to contribute so much more here.”

Implications for Practice

The experience of three years of ACI's *Inner-City Practicum* suggests the following implications for today's teacher preparation programs:

- Initial teaching preferences of pre-service teachers may stem from their known or familiar environments. Reluctance to teach in an urban, high-need school, therefore, may be due in large part to inexperience and lack of exposure. Creating this paradigm shift is possible in large part through direct experience in the urban setting.
- Affording pre-service students frequent and collaborative opportunities to practice their skills builds essential confidence and enthusiasm.
- The student-teacher relationship that is formed in the classroom setting also serves to demystify the urban high-need school setting.

Conclusion

Dewey (1938) contended, “Wholly independent of desire or intent, every experience lives on in further experiences. Hence the central problem of an education based upon experience is to select the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences.” This study illustrates that experience is a powerful determinant of teacher beliefs and shows how pre-service experiences might be modified to prepare prospective teachers specifically for teaching in hard-to-staff schools. ACI's *Inner-City Practicum* plays an important role in allowing pre-service candidates the opportunity to fine-tune their craft. However, more important, it impacts teaching preferences and can even undo negative stereotypes embedded for years.

If we are to have a corps of excellent teachers to serve our neediest students, it will be important to provide paths that allow them to understand critical issues in urban education, to learn and use teaching practices for narrowing the achievement gap, to develop as part of a learning community, and to appreciate the contributions diversity and multiculturalism make to a school, a community, and beyond. Equally important will be the opportunity for this “corps” to grow as a learning community; to share ideas, problems, and solutions; and, ultimately, to realize that their service, activism, and leadership can improve student learning while strengthening their own teaching.

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Professional Development Schools Transform Teacher Education at Quincy University and the University of St. Francis, *by Ann Behrens and John Gambro*

Author Bios

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Abstract

The professional development school (PDS) is an innovative school-site-based program to improve teacher preparation through closer connections between college and school partners. By offering teacher education coursework at the school site as well as the student teaching practicum, the PDS more fully links theory and practice and appears to have beneficial professional development impacts for teachers and faculty members as well as candidates. This article reviews the experience to date of two professional development schools established by member universities of the Associated Colleges of Illinois (ACI) and with support from ACI's *Center for Success in High-Need Schools'* U.S. Department of Education Teacher Quality Enhancement grant: one at Quincy University and the other at the University of St. Francis.

PDS Collaborations

A frequent criticism of teacher preparation programs is that they tend to be disconnected from authentic school-based contexts (Zimpher & Howey, 2005). This problem tends to be intensified and more pervasive in high-need urban schools. One promising remedy to this problem is the collaboration of schools and universities in the form of Professional Development Schools (PDS). Professional development schools are innovative institutions formed through partnerships between professional education programs and P-12 schools (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2001). A recent synthesis of research on teacher education supports this approach stating that, "evidence suggests that collaborative arrangements between university programs and local school districts -- known as professional development schools -- have a positive impact on teacher and pupil learning (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005)."

This article reviews the experience to date of two professional development schools, both recently established by member universities of the Associated Colleges of Illinois (ACI), in collaboration with ACI's *Center for Success in High-Need Schools*, with funding from the U.S. Department of Education's Teacher Quality Enhancement Program. One PDS was created in 2003 at the University of St. Francis in Joliet, IL; the other was established in 2005 at Quincy University in Quincy, IL.

Quincy University PDS

Quincy University is a private co-educational liberal arts university affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church and the Franciscan Friars. Founded in 1860, the university is home to 1,270 students and offers 34 major areas of study and seven pre-professional programs. The faculty consists of 49 full-time and 67 part-time members with a student/faculty ratio of 12:1 and an average class size of 20.

Following a year of intensive planning, Quincy University will implement the first phase of its professional development school model in the spring of 2006. The Collaborative Academy for Teacher Training (CATT) represents

Quincy University's efforts to implement systemic change to better prepare teacher candidates to function in high-need schools. Collaboration among all participating groups and the provision of authentic experiences for teacher candidates are the underlying tenets of the CATT initiative.

Both public and parochial schools are professional development partners with the university. Quincy Public Schools is a K-12 district with approximately 6,400 students. The low-income rate for the district is 42.5% and the mobility rate is 33.1%, nearly double the state average. Of the 11 schools in the district, four will pilot the PDS model: two elementary schools, one intermediate school, and the high school. One parochial school also will be involved in the first phase of implementation. Quincy Notre Dame High School is a private Catholic high school with 500 students.

A planning committee representing all of the stakeholders in this project (university faculty, K-12 teachers and administrators, community college representatives, teacher candidates, parents, and business partners) met throughout summer 2005 to establish goals, clarify and align the vision of the project with that of the university, and begin to address the questions concerning plans for implementation. From this large group, a steering committee was selected to serve as the decision making body for the execution of the grant. This group meets monthly to evaluate progress towards goals, address new issues, and review assessment data.

Quincy University's professional development model is somewhat unique in that it will be implemented during teacher candidates' sophomore year. Current plans call for four sophomore education classes to be taught in the K-12 setting during the second semester of the 2005-2006 school year. Foundations of Education, Educational Psychology, and Survey of the Exceptional Child will be taught in primary and intermediate high-needs schools. Media and Technology in Education, a new course, will be taught in a parochial high school. An integral part of the coursework will be direct classroom observation and participation, including time during the course and additional hours outside the class setting. University faculty members and K-12 faculty have been sharing syllabi and course objectives, revising curriculum, and seeking ways to ensure that teaching candidates will have opportunities to observe and practice the concepts being studied in a real-world setting. Curriculum alignment also has occurred between the university and the community college to ensure that transfer students will have had similar experiences.

Clinical observations also will be tied to the classrooms and courses offered in the school settings. The coordinator of the clinical experience will work closely with university instructors to provide experiences that support course content and, whenever possible, to keep teacher candidates working with the same students and teachers for both the coursework and clinical activities. Two junior-level courses also will be piloted during the second semester: Elementary and Secondary Social Studies Methods courses will be taught in K-12 settings. Teacher candidates will spend part of the class time directly interacting with K-12 students in structured activities directly tied to the course curriculum. All courses being taught in the coming school year will incorporate reflection as an important tool for evaluation, with classroom teachers invited into the college classroom to participate in discussions. A third class, Music Methods, also will follow this model because the instructor was excited about the possibilities and volunteered to participate.

Quincy University's professional development school is based on the collaboration of all of the stakeholders, consistent with the underlying philosophy that everyone involved in the partnership shares responsibility for developing teacher candidates who are prepared to work in high-need schools. This collaboration draws on the strengths of each individual, no matter his or her role, to assist and guide the growth of our teacher candidates. All participants in the professional development school have dual roles as teachers and learners as they work together to find ways to accelerate learning K-16.

Examples of Collaboration

Three examples will illustrate the types of collaboration that already have occurred in the CATT initiative. First, the Coordinator of Music Education at Quincy University is also teaching intermediate-level general music in the public schools and works directly with the high school band. In her capacity as a classroom teacher, she serves as a mentor to a beginning teacher. Based upon her observations of that teacher's needs, she incorporates those skills and strategies into her methods classes to better prepare our music education candidates for teaching situations they are likely to encounter.

Second, the faculty member in the history department has taught AP history at a parochial high school in Quincy for several years. He has experienced firsthand the knowledge base that high school students bring to the classroom, their level of critical thinking, and their ability to read and comprehend extended text. He will integrate that understanding of the characteristics of today's high school students into his social science methods course.

A third example of collaboration involves shared professional development opportunities. Either the university or the K-12 schools may initiate these opportunities. One that is currently being discussed is an intensive literacy coach training designed to impact both individual students and classroom teachers. This training, designed to improve student achievement in reading, is the current focus of the public school professional development activities and may be opened to teacher candidates and university faculty members. Another example is training in the servant leadership model that was sponsored by Quincy University in the spring and made available to K-12 faculty. By jointly participating in professional development activities, each institution can be supportive of the others in promoting research-based innovations in the classroom. Such collaboration leads to a community of learners committed to sustained inquiry.

Long-range plans for the CATT initiative include expanding to additional sites and also including additional parochial schools, rural settings, schools with high numbers of English as second language learners, and inner city settings in East St. Louis, as other education courses are added. Work is under way to infuse more technology into instruction in appropriate, research-based ways in conjunction with the area community college. As the date for implementation of the first phase of the project draws near, the logistics of scheduling, transportation, and maintaining good communication about the project's are being worked out.

Restructuring of the magnitude demanded by CATT offers many challenges as well as opportunities. The delicate balance between rigorous course content and appropriate instructional methodology is an area of ongoing collaboration between the arts and sciences faculty and the university's education faculty. Concerns from the partner school classroom teachers about accountability for *No Child Left Behind* and the pressures of testing will require open dialogue between the university and K-12 school faculty members to ensure that the focus on increasing student learning is maintained.

As planning became more focused, Quincy University changed from its initial proposal involving only 15 teacher candidates to the current plan of involving all sophomore education majors, as well as selected junior year methods students, in the first year of implementation. Openness to new ideas and the willingness to adapt to changing conditions is critical to the success of any professional development school partnership. The ability to identify obstacles, collaborate on ways to overcome them, and reflect upon the relative success of the solution serves as a model to teacher candidates of the problem-solving required in the classroom.

University of St. Francis PDS

Established in 1920, the University of St. Francis (USF) is a Catholic, Franciscan institution offering undergraduate and graduate programs. The university is a private, comprehensive, coeducational institution, serving approximately 1,300 students at its main campuses in Joliet, IL, and more than 3,000 students at off-campus sites throughout the country.

Since its founding, the university has continued to operate as a recognized institution with approval to entitle candidates for elementary certification, special education, a number of secondary areas, and several advanced programs over the history of the program. The College of Education, established in 2000, serves more than 700 undergraduate and graduate candidates.

Joliet Public Schools District 86 is a high-need urban school district with 64% of students classified as low income. Since January 2003, USF has collaborated as a PDS with two schools in the district. This PDS partnership involves two dimensions that fundamentally alter our approach to teacher preparation. First, USF applies a wide-ranging and holistic approach to educating students in high-need schools. This approach addresses the physical, social, emotional, familial, and intellectual development of students. Secondly, in order to support the holistic approach, a comprehensive collaborative framework is being built within and across institutions.

The mission of the USF PDS partnership is to enhance collaboratively the professional preparation of teacher candidates and promote continuous exemplary professional development of all partners. The focus of the PDS partnership is to improve student achievement through research-based practices carried out in an innovative teaching and learning environment. The PDS is dedicated to supporting a diverse community of learners at all levels of educational development through shared decision making, vision, goals, and trust.

Putting this mission statement into action has resulted in several transformations, modifications, and enhancements in USF's teacher preparation program. Our PDS partnership provides a model for improving teacher preparation through the extensive use of collaboration. To support this collaboration, a comprehensive framework that encourages interdependence is necessary. Previously, the approach tended to be much more fragmented, with silos of services and resources. Additionally, collaborations with schools were inclined to be relatively superficial and short-term.

In order to establish an infrastructure that supports the PDS initiative across institutions, a PDS leadership team was established. The leadership team is the governing body that provides a vehicle for partner institutions to integrate the PDS activities into their "routine" policies, procedures, and processes and create a culture that will sustain the new modes of operation. The team consists of teachers from each school, principals, literacy coaches, district administrators (including a curriculum specialist and the assistant superintendent), a College of Education dean, university and community college faculty, a technology specialist, and a teacher candidate representative. Members are continually examining and redefining the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of all participants in support of the mission and vision.

During the past two years, the team has made significant progress toward developing and explicitly defining our shared interest and mutual commitment. Evidence of this progress can be found in the jointly developed common vision, mission, and strategic plan. The team's subcommittees reflect the PDS goals: student achievement, teacher candidates, professional development, technology, action research, and public relations. Membership of the subcommittees includes partners from each institution who cooperatively plan initiatives and arrange for the sharing of resources.

This ongoing collaboration allows USF's philosophical underpinning of a holistic approach to be much more aligned with the university's practice of integrated collaborative services. Consistent with the holistic philosophy, diverse partners provide a broad range of services that support the development of students to ensure readiness to learn. Examples of these services include developmental field experiences, a screening-and-assessment program, the Child Health and Well-being Center, professional development, and arts and sciences faculty collaboration.

Developmental Field Experiences

At the heart of the PDS is the immersion experience of the teacher candidates. Teacher candidates complete a variety of intensive, ongoing field experiences in which candidates observe, assist, tutor, instruct, team-teach, and conduct inquiry-based studies. PDS mentor teachers model best practices for candidates, as they work side by side, providing learning experiences designed to improve achievement among diverse K-5 students. USF's PDS uses a three-phase developmental model of field experiences that provides teacher candidates with purposefully selected activities that gradually allow them to become more comfortable and proficient as teachers.

The beginning field experience is designed to acquaint sophomore-level candidates with schools and teaching. Held three days per week, three hours per day, this phase of training allows the candidates to observe small-group and whole-group instruction, participate in it and reflect upon their experiences. At the PDS schools, teacher candidates participate in the guided reading program in which teacher candidates are trained on guided-reading literacy strategies. The candidates then work with small groups of students, providing instruction, monitoring results, and designing remedial strategies. Teacher candidates are trained by curriculum specialists from District 86 and assessed jointly by university supervisors and district specialists.

The intermediate field experience becomes more intense, giving teacher candidates the opportunity to apply theories and practice strategies learned in methods classes that are specifically related to the school curriculum. The candidates are placed in a PDS school for a half day, while the remainder of the day is spent in various methods courses. While at the PDS schools, teacher candidates work with PDS mentor teachers as they plan and implement a variety of short and long-term learning experiences.

Advanced field experience, often referred to as “student teaching,” provides a sustained full-day, 15-week opportunity for the candidates to apply educational theory in a classroom setting. Teacher candidates continue to work closely with their mentor teachers, but gradually assume more responsibility and become more independent. Candidates are required to plan and implement lessons, evaluate and assess student progress, create and maintain appropriate classroom management techniques, and demonstrate effective interpersonal skills with students, parents, and professionals.

Throughout all of the field experiences, candidates are provided careful supervision and support throughout the learning process by both the PDS mentor teacher and a university supervisor. The university supervisor conducts regular visits to the school site to communicate with the mentor teachers, observe candidates, and coordinate assessment. Consequently, an important component of this activity is the mentoring skills of both the mentor teachers and the supervisors. To this end, teachers and supervisors receive several professional development opportunities designed to enhance their mentoring skills.

At present, there are approximately 15 teacher candidates at each school (approximately five advanced, five intermediate, and five beginning). As the USF partnership has progressed, mentor teachers increasingly view the teacher candidates as valuable assets in the classroom because they are able to provide support for small group instruction, differentiated instruction, and team-teaching. USF refers to an extreme example of this “extra-set-of-hands” occurrence as the “five-teachers-in-one-classroom” incident. On one particular day in a fifth grade classroom, there was a special education teacher candidate, an elementary education teacher candidate, the university supervisor, the university liaison, and the PDS mentor teacher -- all in one classroom. When the teacher had the class begin to work independently, all five “teachers” were circulating around the room providing individual attention and instruction to the students. While this is not a typical scenario, it illustrates the collaborative nature of the partnership and the shared goal of improving student learning.

Screening and Assessment Program

Within the Screening and Assessment Program, teacher candidates enrolled in assessment courses are able to immediately apply their knowledge in an authentic educational environment by providing academic screening services for the PDS schools. As part of the screening process, candidates make recommendations to teachers for interventions and educational plans.

Child Health and Well Being Center

The Child Health and Well Being Center is a collaborative project with the university's Nursing and Social Work Departments. The center provides services that include physical examinations, general health education, and social work. This past summer, free back-to-school physicals were provided on site at one of the PDS schools. There are also plans underway for a school-linked clinic that will allow students to have easy access to primary health care providers. The social work component of the center currently provides interns who assist the school staff in completing case studies, as well as directly intervening with students who may require one-on-one services.

Professional Development

Professional development is a key component of the collaboration. Partners provide joint professional development opportunities in which teacher candidates and PDS teachers learn together. This year, with funding from the TQE grant, USF were able to purchase curriculum materials and have teachers and candidates, as part of their methods course, jointly attend a workshop on effective strategies for using the materials. In addition, partners participate in ongoing professional development activities such as conferences and presentations. USF and PDS teachers have jointly attended several conferences together and collaboratively plan curriculum and learning experiences for students and teacher candidates.

Arts and Sciences Faculty Collaboration

Several members of the faculty from USF's College of Arts and Sciences have been key contributors to various PDS initiatives. For example, this past summer several PDS teachers participated in the Teachers and Scientists for Instructional Renaissance Project (TASIR). TASIR provided teachers direct experience with the materials, content, and methodologies used by grade three through nine teachers in the science and math curricula. Using an inquiry approach, teachers collaboratively explored content and develop instructional activities. Four faculty members from the College of Arts and Sciences provided expert content area instruction in math and science. The project also included participation in field experiences at Argonne National Laboratory (DuPage County, IL) and Pilcher Park Nature Center (Will County, IL).

Another example is the development of a new course designed to blend content knowledge and pedagogy. One faculty member from the Natural Sciences Department is collaborating with an education faculty member to develop a new science course based on the National Science Teacher Association (NSTA) and Association of Childhood Education International (ACEI) Specialty Professional Association (SPA) standards, Illinois Learning Standards, and district curriculum. The course design will include collaboration from education faculty and PDS teachers and will be aligned with science education curricula so that teacher candidates will develop a deep understanding of the science content that is taught in the elementary schools. The class also will involve a strand of teaching methodology that includes teaming science faculty with education faculty to address the lack of integration of content, methods, and curriculum that candidates often experience. Teacher candidates enrolled in the class will apply the content and methods they are learning by periodically teaching exemplar lessons to PDS students. These lessons will be recorded and will serve as a resource for PDS teachers and teacher candidates.

In addition, Arts and Sciences faculty will participate in a needs assessment from which PDS teacher content area needs will be examined and addressed. For example, science faculty will provide periodic workshops for PDS teachers

on integrating science concepts into the curriculum. The workshops will include a live hands-on demonstration with the PDS students utilizing actual materials.

Conclusion

Establishing the University of St. Francis PDS has been a challenging and invigorating experience. The opportunity to collaborate with partners allows the university to operationalize our College of Education's mission in a very practical and authentic manner. All partners agree that the initiatives undertaken have been mutually advantageous, benefiting teacher candidates, in-service teachers, and the K-5 students. The experience truly has changed the way USF and Quincy University conceptualize and deliver their teacher preparation programs.

One interesting effect observed relates to the dispositions of University of St. Francis teacher candidates. Understandably, candidates generally want to complete field experiences in settings that are similar to where they went to school and where they live. High-need urban schools often are a frightening unknown to candidates. Until they get into the schools and experience the culture for themselves, they make judgments based on preconceived notions and stereotypes. In USF's PDS schools, many of candidates alter their perceptions. One teacher candidate placed in a PDS school was initially reluctant because she wanted to complete her field experiences in her home town where she wanted, eventually, to secure a teaching position. She had such a rewarding PDS experience that she decided to work in the district and "make a difference" in a high-need school. She was hired this summer at another school in the district and currently reports that she is having a very successful year.

This fall two significant events occurred that suggest that the University of St. Francis is on the right track. When the partnership was initiated in January of 2003, one of the PDS partner schools had just been placed on the state "watch list" for not making "adequate yearly progress." This fall, due to improved student achievement, the school was removed from the list. Another milestone occurred when the first PDS teacher candidate was hired by one of USF's PDS schools. Because she already has spent two semesters in the school, she understands the culture of the school and the students and is accepted as a veteran member of the staff. These "success stories" provide some indication of progress toward the ultimate goal, which is to provide a high quality education for the students in our PDS schools.

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Collaborations Illuminate the Path to Success, by Cynthia Kuck

Author Bio

Dr. Cynthia Kuck is an urban educator committed to excellence in leadership and education. Currently a professor at Concordia University, in River Forest, IL, she researches issues of public policy as they relate to education. She has developed public policy briefs on the Cleveland voucher system, state recognition of nonpublic schools, and accreditation of colleges of education. In addition, she has been a presenter at more than 100 local, regional, and national conferences on personnel supervision, special education law and policy, school law, teacher certification, performance assessments, and accreditation processes. Dr. Kuck earned her Ph.D. in Public Policy Analysis from the University of Illinois, Chicago.

Abstract

Teacher-educator Cynthia Kuck poses the challenge: We can continue to maintain a system that fails children in high-need schools and robs them of their futures, or we can collaborate to identify the best practices for tough urban classrooms.

Collaborations Illuminate the Path to Success

I've known him all of his young life. He lives in my urban neighborhood and used to play with my son. Bright and full of curiosity, he was a delight to have around my house.

Today, he is a high school graduate who has been robbed of his future -- robbed by a school system that seemed indifferent to his needs, robbed by often caring but ineffectual teachers, robbed by a lack of educational opportunity, and robbed by young parents who themselves had been similarly robbed by their schools. As research by William Sanders, the founder of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System, so starkly reveals, one incompetent teacher can set a student's learning back by five years; two such teachers ensure a student will never reach full-learning potential.

As educators in academia and in the front lines teaching children, we have a choice. We can continue to maintain a system that fails children in high-need schools and robs them of their futures, or we can collaborate to identify the best practices for tough urban classrooms. Together, we can create strong, effective teacher preparation and professional development programs for those entering high-need schools as teachers and leaders.

To successfully address the persistent, debilitating problems facing high-need schools, we need to implement a multi-pronged attack to prepare and support those who work in classrooms and lead schools:

- Strengthening university programs to prepare teachers and school leaders to work in high-need urban schools;
- Identifying crucial areas of research for these schools;
- Implementing this research in the design of programs for teacher and school-leader preparation and ongoing professional development;
- Engaging in strong advocacy, grounded in research, to public policy makers on the needs of urban schools; and
- Building effective partnerships between schools of education, colleges of arts and sciences, and high-need schools.

This initiative will require strong collaborations like those found at the Associated Colleges of Illinois' *Center for Success in High-Need Schools*. The Center brings together the components for preparing effective urban educators and building strong urban school systems. Here, arts and science faculty work to give educators a strong content base that marries theory and practice to improve teaching and learning in high-need schools. Here, schools and university faculty join together to learn from each other and to educate policy makers about critical issues confronting those in high-need

schools. Here, a path to improve schools can be found, and students in high-need schools have the opportunity to benefit from access to high-quality education programs.

The education of all children, rich and poor, is our responsibility. The opportunity to offer a high-quality education to all students is before us. If we work together, opportunities can become a reality for those in high-need schools.

We Are All Culpable, by Terry Mazany

Author Bio

Terry Mazany is President and Chief Executive Officer of the Chicago Community Trust. Previously, Mazany was the Trust's Chief Operating Officer, as well as Director and Senior program officer of the Trust's Education Initiative. In this capacity, Mazany led the design and implementation of the Trust's \$50 million, five-year commitment to supporting literacy, teacher and principal quality, and school improvement in Chicago. Before joining the Trust in 2001, Mazany had a distinguished career in public school administration, leading improvement efforts in school districts in Oakland, California and, most recently, in Michigan.

Abstract

The President and Chief Executive Officer of the Chicago Community Trust believes that we all share a responsibility to create a public school system with the capacity to educate every student to a level at which college is a realistic option.

We Are All Culpable

It's easy to get people all riled up about the failure of public education and the consequent injustices wrought on our nation's most vulnerable population – our children. The reality is we are all culpable for the failure of public education because we live in a time in which our expectations for public schools exceed our willingness to fund those schools.

Despite arguments to the contrary, money matters. Chicago's North Shore communities demonstrate the validity of this assumption. If money didn't matter, the well-educated citizens of Winnetka, IL, would not voluntarily submit to the tax burden required for its school system to spend \$15,000 per student per year. Imagine what the hard-working teachers of the Chicago Public Schools could do with that level of funding?

Of course, some people argue that a bureaucracy like the Chicago Public Schools would just waste such generous resources. I don't buy it. Having worked in both a very poor school district and a very affluent one, I can personally attest that, by necessity, underfunded school districts are generally much more efficient with their resources.

Affluent districts use their money for above-average contracts for teachers and administrators, enabling schools to attract top talent, cultivate high morale, and pay stipends for extra-curricular assignments. Their money buys modern, well-maintained facilities. It buys small class sizes and diverse learning experiences that can be offered to a handful of interested students. It buys after-school clubs and well-equipped athletic teams. It buys counselors and additional administrators to adequately oversee school operations and instruction. From my perspective, this model establishes the floor for an adequate education: one that provides students with a full range of choices that promote their development – including the choice of whether to pursue college and which one to attend. I do not believe it is the state's right to decide who should go to college – and yet our current school finance scheme does exactly that.

Adequate education is not in the cards for the Chicago Public Schools because expenses are rising faster than revenues at this and many other Illinois districts. Each year, CPS faces a structural budget deficit of \$150-200 million, which must be repaid before the system can even think about improving the quality of teaching and learning.

How much will it cost to close the gap? Illinois legislators peg the number at \$1,600 per pupil, which translates into a \$2.3 billion funding gap. If we are not willing to tax ourselves to raise the additional funds, then we have to look elsewhere-- to corporations, foundations and wealthy individuals, and, yes, even to not-for-profit institutions, such as our colleges and universities.

And even with an extra \$2.3 billion, we'll still fall short of addressing the requirements of high-need schools. Why? Because good teachers matter as much as money. Research clearly demonstrates both the positive impact of quality teachers and the devastating consequences of bad teaching. Given this critical relationship, it's time we take a hard look at the responsibilities and obligations of our institutions of higher education.

First, we can no longer afford to position colleges of education as cash cows. Instead of using revenues from colleges of education to subsidize other institutional pursuits, universities must be willing to use other resources to subsidize the cost of teacher preparation.

Second, higher education needs to establish incentives that attract the very best students -- the top 10% of a high school graduating class -- into colleges of education.

Third, teacher education programs must convert to a five-year model, including a full year of classroom practicum, followed by at least two years of intense in-service supervision for novice teachers. Implementing this approach requires that colleges and universities invest in additional faculty and staff, including clinical instructors, who can achieve the status of tenured faculty. At the same time, institutions of higher education must establish productive partnerships with school districts to support novice teacher placement and development.

A fifth year of teacher education also would create more time for content preparation. Strong content knowledge is a prerequisite for a good teacher. Teacher education must blend liberal arts education with pedagogy, and teacher preparation should be viewed as a campus-wide responsibility, with all disciplines equally vested in building teachers' knowledge of content. Thanks to the close link between the arts and sciences faculty and the education faculty at liberal arts institutions, Associated Colleges of Illinois members are uniquely positioned to do this.

The five-year model does have one serious drawback from the perspective of low-income students. The financials of a fifth year do not work for these students, many of whom are the minorities we desperately need in the teacher corps. These teacher-candidates are working their way through school. They cannot afford to forego income from a job, while student teaching full-time and paying tuition. As a result, the five-year model requires both tuition support and living stipends for teacher-candidates.

Finally, teacher education programs must commit themselves to collecting data on the performance of students under the tutelage of their alumni -- and to using these data to improve their degree programs in education.

We need more money; we need better teachers; we need more ambitious teacher preparation programs -- and we need to understand both the scope of the problem and the necessary scale of successful solutions. Chicago, New York and Los Angeles are mega-districts that require solutions of a qualitatively different scale, operating under different design principles than those conceived for other districts.

I admire the bold vision of ACI's *Center for Success in High-Needs Schools*, which puts the issue of high-need schools right out there for all of us to see. The *Center* demonstrates what it will take to deliver on the promise that forms the bedrock of the American dream: equal opportunity for all our children. Individually, no single ACI member could impact the problem, even if they were producing the premier teachers in the universe. These isolated teachers would be effectively neutralized, demoralized and driven to the greener pastures of the suburban schools. Collectively, under the rubric of ACI's *Center for Success in High-Need Schools*, ACI members can secure the attention of school systems, organize systematic supports for their graduates, and place their alumni strategically, so as to instantly elevate the quality of classroom instruction and form a collective force that can transform the outcomes of an entire school.

We share a responsibility to create a public school system with the capacity to educate every student to a level at which college is a realistic option. We share responsibility to foster the collection of data and to demand transparent use of that data to identify our strengths and weaknesses. We share responsibility to partner with school systems to establish and deliver on teaching standards worthy of the demands of our high-need schools, and to construct pathways of professional preparation that produce sufficient numbers of outstanding candidates to meet the system's needs. Finally, we share responsibility to ensure that these leading teachers are supported in their novice years. This will enable them to absorb the lessons gained from hard experience, while retaining their passion to remain in our high-need schools where there is so much to be done.

If we fail in these responsibilities, we are all culpable.