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AILACTE Journal Volume XII Call for Manuscripts

The *AILACTE Journal* is a refereed journal with national representation on its editorial review board published by The Association of Independent Liberal Arts Colleges for Teacher Education. Each issue is nonthematic. The journal, published annually, is soliciting manuscripts addressing issues related to teacher education within the liberal arts context; including teaching and learning, preservice and inservice education, research and practice related to the preparation and development of teachers, and other related topics. Project descriptions, research reports, theoretical papers, papers espousing a particular point of view and descriptions of activities or issues pertinent to the education and professional development of teachers at the local, state or national level would be appropriate topics for the journal.

Criteria for submitting a manuscript:

Authors must submit their manuscripts electronically as email attachments by July 1, 2015 to the following email address: ailactejournal@transy.edu. Manuscripts must comply with *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition* (2010) for format and style and not exceed 15 pages, double spaced. Within the body of the manuscript, authors must disguise all identifying information that could compromise our blind review process. Manuscripts must contain the following:

- a cover page that contains the title, abstract, keywords, and all authors' names, highest degree earned, titles, and institutional affiliations, in order of authorship;
- a title page that contains only the complete manuscript title, abstract (150-word maximum), and keywords, and;
- the body of the manuscript that also contains a running head (no more than 50 characters) and uses a pagination format that adheres to APA style guidelines.

In a separate file, authors are requested to send the following:

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telephone numbers (including cell phones if appropriate) of each author on the manuscript, and;

- a separate page that contains autobiographical sketches of each author (comprised of three to five sentences for each).

In light of our blind review process, please address all correspondence to ailactejournal@transy.edu.

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From the Editor

I am pleased to present Volume XI of the *AILACTE Journal* with sincere thanks to the 2014 Editorial Review Board, the editorial team at Transylvania, the authors who submitted such fine manuscripts, and, to the AILCATE Executive Committee for its continued support. Those of us in education bear witness to compelling pressures for the world of teacher preparation. Changes in classroom demographics, emerging technologies, and increased accountability are just a few of the forces shaping our discipline today. In the face of such challenges, AILACTE provides a much needed venue for those voices who champion the role of liberal education in preparing future teachers. The variety of articles presented here reflect the range and reach of those voices.

In the opening article, Jillian Lederhouse advances the case for liberal education in preparing future teachers in spite of inherent tensions between regulatory agencies, P–12 constituents, and the liberal arts. She discusses a conceptual framework that articulates both a time-honored and contemporary vision for the role of liberal arts in education. Julie Kalnin bridges the worlds of higher education and the P–12 context in describing the implementation of proficiency-based grading in a course on assessment. Susan Adams and Elizabeth Mix remind us of powerful insights education faculty have about pedagogy in their description of a cross-disciplinary approach to faculty development through critical friendship groups. Coming from a deep commitment to social justice, Belinda Richardson and Elizabeth Dinkins address the compelling theme of culturally responsive pedagogy in describing their partnership with a tribal college in the development of rich cross-cultural field experiences for their students. In this contentious time for the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), Holly Pae, Greta Freeman, and Pamela Wash provide a piece that describes their study of teacher candidates' impressions of a sample CCSS assessment for fifth grade language arts. Jean Rattigan-Rohr, and her colleagues, Ye He, Mary Beth Murphy, and Gerald Knight, describe a community-based after-school tutoring project involving both parents and preservice teachers which had a positive impact on children's learning. Finally, Lenore Kinne, Jon Hasenbank, and David Coffey round out the journal with an article on the use of formative assessment rubrics in their work in preparing teacher candidates. While each individual article represents significant and timely scholarship, collectively these pieces also represent the varied dimensions of the work in our realm which continues its charge of bringing excellence to the world of education through a commitment to the liberal arts.

Amelia El-Hindi Trail

Teaching and Leading for Human Flourishing: Creating a Liberal Arts Framework for Teacher Preparation

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Wheaton College

Abstract

To satisfy the ongoing demands of external communities, education faculty at liberal arts colleges often make curricular and instructional compromises within their programs which can adversely affect the developmental goals of liberal education. This article highlights several of the complex tensions faculty members face in offering their candidates a program that equips them for professional practice yet still explores the larger scope of what it means to be fully human. It describes a framework for liberal arts teacher preparation as well as the process by which it was developed and the benefits that have resulted from this process.

Keywords: **liberal arts, teacher preparation, conceptual framework**

Education faculty members at liberal arts colleges inhabit three complex and dynamic communities. They first reside in the traditional academy, where faculty members teach courses, advise students, design and revise curriculum, engage in research, and serve through committee work and other forms of institutional assistance. In fulfilling these roles, they meet the same expectations as all other members of the academy.

Additionally, teacher preparation programs require faculty to engage continuously with the P–12 school community. This realm extends beyond the neighborhood surrounding a college campus to include rural, suburban, urban and many times international locations in order to prepare candidates for the diverse learners they will teach. For this reason education faculty members network to develop partnerships with district administrators. Teacher educators foster relationships with principals and department chairs, who provide placements, and teachers, who mentor candidates during clinical experiences. These P–12 relationships often connect education programs with other community partners as well, such as relief agencies, park districts, churches, boys and girls clubs, and libraries.

Finally, teacher preparation involves complex interaction with the policy community of local, state and federal regulatory agencies and frequently national accreditation bodies. These relationships require education faculty members to design their curriculum and structure their protocols to meet professional standards, state school codes, licensure examination formats, and federal compliance regulations. This interface occurs not only with one's own state agency but also with other state boards of education in order to advocate for graduates who seek certification in those regions. Faculty members also participate in the regulatory community through serving in state and national professional associations in order to improve the field and shape policies affecting accreditation in the future.

Tension Between the Three Communities

Even if all three of these communities shared identical aims and

purposes, completing the numerous tasks required of liberal arts teacher educators could still be considered ambitious work. But while the goals of these distinct communities at times intersect, more often they diverge or even conflict with one another. For example, the traditional purpose of liberal arts education has been to explore what it means to be fully human and to develop critical and creative thinking in the process of this interdisciplinary exploration. Professional and P–12 standards, whether from a state or national accrediting body, do not reflect this scholarly journey but only its results (CCSSO, 2011; CAEP, 2013). Meeting standards requires documented evidence of what teacher candidates and their P–12 students are able to *do*. This emphasis on performance only increases after entry into the profession. Teachers' evaluations today in most states are combinations of directly observed instructional practices and student performance on standardized assessments. Products are valued more than the reflective, developmental process through which they unfold.

Because liberal arts education occurs within an academic context of preparation for life, it is primarily engaged in developing intellectual and moral virtues rather than vocational preparation. This goal appears to make the concept of undergraduate liberal arts teacher preparation an oxymoron. However, rather than view this incoherence as an impediment to their work, faculty in the Department of Education at my liberal arts college see our mission as building on the strongest base professional educators can acquire. We firmly believe that the best prepared teachers are those with a liberal arts foundation. The interdisciplinary thinking developed from this form of education prepares graduates to reflect on their own practice and view their curricular and instructional goals through the broader lens of this tradition.

As a department chair in a liberal arts teacher preparation program, I am grateful for faculty members who integrate this tradition within our foundations, methods and clinical courses. But while my department reconciles and values the merger of liberal arts and professional education, this perspective is not prevalent outside my institution. The clash between philosophies of the regulatory

community and our department became apparent when completing a matrix on my own state's most recent set of professional teaching standards (ISBE, 2010). Of the 159 knowledge and performance indicators that candidates must demonstrate to receive their license, only two touched on areas covered in philosophy of education, our capstone course.

Another example of these conflicts is found in feedback we have received from our P–12 partners. Some teachers who serve as mentors during early field experiences comment that they would like to have our candidates for longer periods of time each week so that they could work with more students. Principals frequently ask for our candidates to provide tutoring before and after school or during the lunch hour. Reading specialists ask for all day assistance during district-wide testing weeks. This need becomes more pronounced after every wave of district-wide staff reductions. Although we try to accommodate our partners and realize our students would benefit from these additional experiences, P–12 school staff members, at times, seem unaware that our students are enrolled in 17 semester hours of classes besides their practicum and attend them during the same time period as the typical P–12 school day.

Condensing the liberal arts content into a different format for education students to provide greater flexibility for serving P–12 schools has a cost. Compacting or reformatting the liberal arts core for education majors increases financial costs for small institutions, but more importantly, it isolates education students from rich, interdisciplinary discussion with their non-education college peers. It establishes one track for education majors and a different one for every other student, making transfers in and out of the education major after the freshman year expensive for students as well.

Similarly, professional organizations and accrediting bodies have called for an increased emphasis on clinical experiences (NCATE, 2010), which is not an unreasonable goal until you see its effect on a rigorous liberal arts course of study. At a recent meeting between university leaders and my state's Board of Education chair, one liberal arts college president made an impassioned plea against teacher education reforms that work against the goals of

liberal education. He praised his own education faculty members' skill in implementing the large volume of recent state-imposed curricular changes without reducing their college's liberal arts core. But he wondered aloud how much longer liberal arts teacher preparation could exist if this state-driven pace continued. He had thoughtfully prefaced these remarks by stating that while the liberal arts are not the only way to prepare professional educators, they provide an excellent foundation for a career in P–12 schools. His proof was the fact that both the state's current teacher and principal of the year happened to be alumni of his liberal arts institution.

These examples highlight the tension created by well-intentioned but competing demands of the three communities. Liberal arts education faculty must find the delicate balance between educating their candidates, serving their school communities, and satisfying accreditation criteria to provide their candidates with a high quality professional preparation yet still offer them an education for life. If education faculty do not recognize or address these tensions, the liberal arts core of teacher preparation will erode. And if liberal arts education faculty members do not advocate for this form of teacher preparation in all three communities, how can they expect it to be valued outside of their own departments?

Developing a Model of Liberal Arts Teacher Preparation

As was articulated so eloquently by the Wheaton College president, my department colleagues and I are similarly strong advocates for liberal arts teacher preparation. Because we are a faith-based liberal arts institution, we believe strongly in exploring what it means to be human beings who have been created and redeemed by God. In addition to providing disciplinary expertise through an education major and a content area major (secondary) or liberal arts concentration (elementary), we seek to develop this understanding through a 70-semester hour general education program of study. This broad background fosters interdisciplinary connections and provides the conduit for critical and creative thinking as well as the moral development needed by P–12 educators throughout their careers.

Our belief in the value of the liberal arts caused us to reexamine our own program's conceptual framework to determine if it truly reflected this value or if it focused more on external initiatives. Our prior conceptual theme, "Preparing Teachers as Agents of Change," while similarly established on a liberal arts foundation, appeared to reflect more on educational reform issues than liberal arts outcomes. Providing a quality education to those who historically have had limited opportunities to learn is a noble and worthy social justice goal. But we questioned whether getting every child to a designated achievement level was consistent with that of liberal arts education which encompasses so much more than merely meeting standards. Liberal education aspires to promote human flourishing; it explores what it means to be fully human in order to experience a more enriched life. This requires a shift in focus from getting all learners to the same ending point to one of getting each of them to actualize their potential, even for the student whose starting point exceeds the standard. Our challenge was to articulate a vision of teacher preparation that balanced our responsibilities to accrediting bodies and the P–12 school community with our commitment to liberal education.

From this discussion we embarked on a three-year journey of readings, retreats, brainstorming, drafting and revising. Although we recognized the various strengths of "Preparing Teachers as Agents of Change," we arrived at a new conceptual vision, "Teaching and Leading for Human Flourishing," because it more fully represented our work as liberal arts teacher educators. We then listed the various ways in which our graduates would embody this vision and clustered these roles and outcomes into the categories of knowledge, skills and dispositions. These, in turn, were incorporated into a document that articulated our philosophy, its integration into our various programs of study and clinical experiences, and the ways in which we assessed our student's proficiency in each of these categories.

We solicited feedback on this narrative from arts and sciences faculty, P–12 administrative and teaching partners, and recent alumni. We also sought feedback on the document's strengths and

weaknesses from our senior students. Finally, we received input from our senior college administrators and Board of Trustees before sending it to our state Board of Education for endorsement. As an institution in a CAEP partnership state, we were required to have a state approved conceptual framework for each of our programs to meet accreditation standards. This process took a significant amount of time but resulted in all stakeholders having a sense of ownership in the document.

Articulating the Concept of Human Flourishing

The idea of educating for human flourishing has ancient roots. Although its presence is found in the wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible, its connection to the contemporary academy is seen in the works of Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. The concept is found throughout Christian theology in recognizing that all individuals are created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26, 27) and therefore have inherent value as well as the capacity to learn and grow.

Human flourishing is the ethical and purposeful realization of human attributes, in mind, body and spirit, which fits a person, as Milton said, "to perform justly, skillfully, and magnanimously all the offices of public and private life" (Milton, 1644, p.3). We see this concept translated into the work of our education graduates as instilling and developing the knowledge, skills, and intellectual and moral virtues which help to actualize this potential within their students. In order to teach for human flourishing, our candidates need a broad background in the liberal arts, expertise in the subject matter, knowledge of the ways in which children and adolescents learn best, knowledge of the optimal conditions to achieve the *education good*, and the skills, virtues and dispositions worthy of the profession.

Although a teacher education program based on the concept of human flourishing would receive support from the academy, the challenges in adopting this framework were apparent when we attempted to operationalize the concept. Human flourishing needed to be understood, observed, and assessed in the two communities

outside the academy. We asked ourselves the following questions: What are the signs that our teacher candidates actually meet this goal of teaching and leading for human flourishing? What does human flourishing look like in the P–12 classroom? How does this lofty aspiration intersect with the 159 state professional teaching standards' indicators which must be met for state licensure?

As a department, we determined that teaching and leading for human flourishing require three distinct professional and dispositional components: embodying justice, making ethical and reasoned decisions, and, because we are a faith-based education department, acting in a Christ-like manner. Although these components were similar to those in our earlier framework, we determined to articulate more fully their close connection to the liberal arts.

Embodying justice

In society justice serves as a critical conduit to foster the social, cultural, political, economic and moral conditions that will improve the individual and society as a whole (Keller, 2010). Within the P–12 classroom, justice is equally essential for human flourishing (Adler, 1982; Dewey, 1938; Hansen, 2007; Lockerbie, 2005). Teachers who embody justice in their classrooms recognize and address the various contexts which surround individual students' needs for learning (Tomlinson, 2005). They work to ensure that each student has the optimal opportunity to learn regardless of his or her economic level, ethnicity, linguistic or cultural background, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, academic ability, or experiential level (ISBE, 2010). Additionally, they hold a long-range perspective of developing their students' interdisciplinary knowledge, care for the physical environment, life skills, and civic engagement in order to equip them to participate fully in post-secondary education, careers and community life (Spears & Loomis, 2009).

Teacher candidates who embody justice view students' competencies and capacities in a holistic manner; they seek to know their students as persons and recognize that many of their talents may exist outside of core academic areas. These educators then use this

knowledge to develop their students' academic and social goals. Just teachers create a safe learning environment in order to enhance social relationships and engage students through mutual respect and cooperation. They hold all learners to high expectations but provide the necessary support for all of them to succeed.

Just teacher candidates offer a rich and rigorous curriculum to their students, offering a depth of understanding within their own discipline and demonstrating its connection to other content areas. They use evidence-based instructional approaches that reflect the research on diverse learners, demonstrating cultural competence in the curricular and pedagogical choices they make (Moughamian, Rivera & Francis, 2009; Sousa & Tomlinson, 2011). Finally, they build strong relationships with students, parents and guardians, realizing that positive relationships are both instrumental to and the outcome of good teaching.

Making ethical and reasoned decisions

The second component of teaching and leading for human flourishing relates to the numerous decisions educators make on a daily basis. A liberal education allows our candidates to grow as thinkers and problem solvers so that they can address the holistic learning needs of their students through these decisions (Holmes, 2007; Palmer, 1998). This is accomplished through a decision-making process that is not based on a limited number of prescribed choices but is based in sound reasoning (*euboulia*—deliberating well) and practical wisdom (*phronesis*—prudence, and *metis*—savvy), and considers a body of evidence, clinical experience, exemplary research, and relational understandings (Spears & Loomis, 2009).

The practice of teacher candidates who make ethical and reasoned decisions should lead to certain desirable outcomes, such as independent student learning that results from developmentally appropriate learning activities (Berger, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978). These decisions must address both the breadth and depth of the curriculum, focusing on the central concepts of a discipline and its connection to other content areas (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Ethical and reasoned decisions emanate, in part, from robust

assessment data which guide and enhance the instructional process (Afferblach, 2007).

This type of decision-making also involves the ability to make connections with life outside of the classroom through a rich variety of resources, including community members and appropriate technologies (Marzano, Pickering, & Heflebower, 2011; Noddings, 2007). This component should also focus on increasing students' literacy skills in and through all areas of the curriculum since they are essential to independent learning (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Graham & Perin, 2007; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008; Vacca, Vacca, & Mraz, 2010). Finally, ethical and reasoned decision-making should involve both local and global contexts in order to prepare students for life in an interconnected world (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Acting in a Christ-like manner

The third and final component of teaching and leading for human flourishing at our institution involves dispositions of moral virtues, which have a long tradition in liberal arts education (Holmes, A.F.,1991; Lewis, 2001) and hold a historic place in teacher preparation (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2013). Because our program is grounded in Christian principles, we identify this aspect as acting in a Christ-like manner. We believe that Christ is our ultimate model of justice, love, and service. His example in scripture also reminds us that teaching requires humility and respect for the dignity of everyone.

Translating these qualities into a secular, educational context required us to describe and structure these qualities in terms of professional categories. The first of these categories is professionalism, in which candidates demonstrate professional and ethical conduct with supervisors, students, colleagues, and the community (Danielson, 2007). Examples of appropriate conduct include promptness, perseverance, proper confidentiality, and honesty. The second category is collaboration, where candidates foster relationships that enhance the teaching and learning experience (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Examples of collaborative

dispositions include being courteous, astute, and impartial, and a willingness to engage in open dialogue to accomplish goals as part of a larger group.

The third category is scholarship, in which candidates demonstrate a commitment to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, intellectual curiosity and moral development (Boyer, 1997). Examples of a scholarly manner include enthusiasm, humility, and courage in the pursuit of learning. The fourth category, problem-solving, holds the expectations that candidates adjust successfully to new circumstances, are flexible in nature, and persist through adversity (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006; Wiggins and McTighe, 2005). Examples of problem-solving include the ability to be reflective, insightful, and positive when receiving constructive feedback.

The fifth category is initiative, where candidates actively demonstrate the ability to foster extensions in learning and teaching (Palmer, 1998). Qualities emanating from this category include self-direction, creativity and confidence. The final category is leadership, where candidates demonstrate effective communication skills, thinking skills and creative expression (Glickman, 2002; Reeves, 2006). This area includes practices that reflect intellectual and emotional engagement with colleagues and issues. It requires respect for all people while providing opportunities to hear, consider, and discuss ideas and varying viewpoints.

Conclusions

We have realized several benefits from the process of re-conceptualizing our teacher preparation framework. First, it has engaged and re-engaged department faculty members, particularly those who joined the department after the last revision of our former framework. Their contribution to the new document has helped them understand and invest more fully in the relationship between the liberal arts and teacher education.

Seeking feedback from arts and sciences faculty has improved our understanding of current issues in the disciplines and enabled content professors to see their critical role in teacher formation. This reciprocity has not only forged a stronger partnership within

the college, it has also created a more cohesive program of study for our students. Our department's conceptual framework revision has served as an example for the entire college as it moves toward enhancing the liberal arts general education program for students in all majors.

Secondly, the process has strengthened our relationship with P–12 partners because it has helped them perceive how the liberal arts form our candidates and has demonstrated that we understand, in part, the complexity of the work they do. Feedback from principals, teachers and superintendents was overwhelmingly positive, with several individuals stating they wished they had the same learning opportunities we offer our students. But their critique also contributed significantly. On an early draft, they asked us to emphasize the relational aspect of teaching even more than we had articulated. Their contribution to the document helped all of us value the partnerships between our two communities.

Thirdly, this process has enabled our state and national accreditation bodies to see that liberal arts teacher education, despite its cost in time and resources, continues to be a viable and vital alternative to fast-track, apprenticeship types of preparation programs. They have seen how the liberal arts develop the very intellectual, social and moral skills required to foster 21st century learning. Rather than viewing the liberal arts model as obsolete, program reviewers have seen how it develops the capacity for critical analysis and creative thinking needed to meet our state's recently adopted P–12 curricular outcomes (CCSSO, 2011; ISBE, 2010; CAEP, 2013).

Feedback from alumni and current students helped us see the need to articulate more clearly how the liberal arts develop the professional roles of a teacher, as they were reluctant to have us set aside the model they had experienced in our program. In contrast to our first drafts of human flourishing, they saw being an "agent of change" as far more empowering and defining of their mission. They pointed out our need to translate the intellectual work of the college classroom into the language which describes the intellectual work they accomplish as professional educators. In addition

to helping us link the overarching values of liberal education with specific teaching skills, our graduates' and seniors' contributions in this process helped us perceive the marked influence of a conceptual framework on professional development. Their reluctance to have us set aside "their" framework showed us the power of an organizing theme on teacher development.

Although the process of defining human flourishing in the P–12 context required three years and involved many stakeholders, the result was not only a clear vision of a time-honored but contemporary means of teacher preparation, but the method by which it was achieved also strengthened the relationships between all three educational communities. I would similarly encourage all liberal arts college teacher education programs, whether faith-based or otherwise, to promote the liberal arts as an essential means for preparing the next generation of professional educators. In this era of mandated college and career readiness standards, such as Common Core State Standards, the intellectual and academic skills required for student mastery of P–12 literacy and math standards mirror those achieved through a liberal arts education. These include such tasks as analyzing and synthesizing multiple texts in a history class or constructing viable arguments and critiquing the reasoning of others in algebra (CCSSO, 2011). Additionally the analytical, reflective, and articulation skills required of the edTPA and other similar teacher performance assessments are similarly developed through liberal arts study.

Liberal arts education faculty will continue to face challenges in finding the delicate balance between educating their candidates, serving their school communities, and satisfying accreditation bodies. But by communicating the important role of the liberal arts in teacher formation, we can help these diverse groups more fully understand their relationship to creating teachers committed to human flourishing. Rather than regarding liberal arts education as independent of teacher preparation, they will come to see it as an indispensable means to achieve it.

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Proficiency-Based Grading: Can We Practice What They Preach?

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Abstract

The practice of assessing and grading students on their ability to demonstrate proficiency related to a standard has grown significantly in K–12 settings over the past decade. This article invites teacher educators to consider how to respond to this trend by examining an approach for preparing teacher candidates to participate effectively in proficiency-based systems. The process of integrating a proficiency-based grading strand into one undergraduate assessment course for elementary teacher candidates is described to illustrate how an approach advocated in the K–12 environment may be adapted to a higher education setting. Reflections on both the challenges and the benefits of the adaptation suggest that approaching course design from a proficiency-based perspective, while perhaps most valuable in a course that builds candidates' assessment literacy, can also enhance teacher educators' efforts to design purposeful course experiences in other arenas.

Keywords: **assessment, preservice teachers, proficiency-based grading, teacher preparation**

The phrase "teacher preparation" expresses a central relationship between education programs and the profession. In order to prepare teachers well, programs must be responsive to the contexts that their candidates can anticipate entering. Yet, shifting mandates and emerging practices that could prove either fads or substantive reforms complicate the responsive stance. For teacher educators, teacher preparation is more than job training; it is the education of professionals who will not only work within, but also will have the knowledge, skill, and disposition to influence, the educational system. Tensions can arise as individual teacher educators and programs wrestle with questions of how to be both responsive to, and stewards of, the profession we serve.

Assessment is perhaps the most prominent area in which such tensions have surfaced since the legislation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001. Within the NCLB assessment context, teacher educators have thoughtfully explored ways to support their candidates in learning about (Reeder & Utley, 2008), adjusting to (Bates & Burbank, 2008), or complying with NCLB while resisting its testing-focused student characterizations and curriculum constraints (Samuel & Suh, 2012; Taylor, 2010; Wepner, 2006; Whitenack & Swanson, 2013).

Educators beyond the academy have also developed responses to counter the fragmenting effects of NCLB. One response that is increasingly being adopted in K–12 settings is proficiency- or standards-based grading. Essentially, proficiency-based grading emphasizes a more holistic focus on the standards behind standardized testing. The approach bases grades not on factors such as attendance or behavior, but on a student's ability to demonstrate understanding and skill in relation to a standard.

In a 2013 interview, Robert Marzano concluded, "Standards-based grading is beginning to grow exponentially" (Koumpilova, 2013). A brief internet search can confirm this statement. A search for proficiency- or standards- based grading will yield results from districts from Florida to Colorado, North Carolina to Washington, and run a solid swath through the Midwest and down the Eastern seaboard. During the preparation of this article, 55 post-secondary

institutions in New England formally signed the Collegiate Endorsement of Proficiency-Based Education and Graduation. This straightforward statement supports "proficiency-based approaches to instruction, assessment, and reporting" and signers pledge to accept a wide range of transcripts to ensure that students with proficiency-based records will be in no way disadvantaged (New England Secondary School Consortium, 2014). Evidence that proficiency-based grading has a positive impact for student learning is emerging (Pekel, 2013; Welsh, D'Agostino, & Kaniskan, 2013; Winters & Cowen, 2012). As proficiency-based grading's acceptance grows, teacher educators need to consider whether—and how—to respond to this assessment movement.

Re-examining Proficiency-Based Grading

Although proficiency-based grading is highly visible today, the precepts are not new. In his 1998 book, *Educative Assessment*, Grant Wiggins advocated assessing and reporting student performance using proficiency-based grading. The practice has roots in mastery learning (e.g. Bloom, 1968; Block & Burns, 1974) and clearly shares theoretical and practical perspectives with outcome-based education (e.g. Spady, 1994). Resnick's (1999, 2005) discussions of effort-based learning and the need to more clearly define standards are also close associates. Those shared theoretical underpinnings are most clearly defined in the Principles of Learning advocated by the Institute for Learning (IFL), which include a focus on "organizing for effort," "clear expectations," and "fair and credible evaluations" (IFL, 2014).

Certainly, teacher educators are no strangers to the concept of assessing using proficiency scales. With the rapid deployment of EdTPA by 34 states and 522 teacher preparation programs across the nation (AACTE, 2014), we can expect to become only more skilled in evaluating our candidates from this perspective. In my experience, however, proficiency assessment is a tool often restricted to clinical placements. Preparing our students for EdTPA may change this restriction, as experiences in coursework are likely to be more intentionally aligned with the performance assessment.

Even without the influence of EdTPA, though, evidence about grade inflation in schools of education (Koedel, 2011; Nikolakakos, Reeves, & Shuch, 2012) should spur teacher educators to reexamine our grading practices.

In this article, I will describe the process I went through to develop an approach for integrating a proficiency-based assessment strand in a semester-long undergraduate course for elementary teacher candidates. I describe an experience that provided me with a compelling rationale for change, outline how I adapted the K–12 proficiency grading model to a higher education setting, and reflect on the challenges and benefits of this approach.

Learning from Experience

I first was introduced to the current iteration of proficiency-based grading in 2007 when I was teaching in a unique university-district partnership between Austin Public Schools and the University of Minnesota. The Hormel Foundation had generously funded a masters' cohort designed to engage the district's teachers in improving literacy, math and science instruction. Intensive summer sessions focused on disciplinary content; year-long courses emphasized implementation of that content through providing curriculum design activities, strengthening collaborative practices such as peer coaching, and infusing data analysis into instructional decision-making.

The first course in the program was a semester-long introduction to teacher leadership and collaboration; the goal was to begin de-privatizing teaching practice (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996) through meaningful professional conversations (Garmston & Wellman, 1998). One assignment was for the teachers to form book study groups. In addition to the books I had offered as options, I encouraged teachers to bring in books they wanted to read with colleagues. One group, Lynn Hemann, Eric Harder and Curtis Bartlett decided to read O'Connor's (2007) *A Repair Kit for Grading, 15 Fixes for Broken Grades*. Their choice stemmed initially from frustration. How could students' unrelenting negotiations about grades be redirected? Through their discussion of O'Connor's text,

though, the group began to consider how to change grading practices for a more fundamental reason—supporting student learning. O'Connor's text stresses that teachers have a responsibility to ensure that grades are accurate reflections of what students have learned, not rewards for attendance or cooperative behavior. When the standards for grades are meaningful, transparent, and fair, grades can support, rather than retrospectively label, the learning process (O'Connor, 2007). O'Connor's ideas provided an impetus for change.

In the next implementation-focused course of their masters' program, Bartlett and Harder, who both taught eighth-grade pre-algebra, opted to prepare for proficiency-based grading by developing a curriculum map that aligned their course materials with state standards; in determining unit objectives the teachers referred particularly to state testing specifications. Then, with district assistance, the two carried out data analysis that further supported their rationale for incorporating O'Connor's recommendations. In comparing their students' semester grades with their scores on state math assessments, it was clear that grades were not correlated with scores on the state test (r^2=.194) (Pekel, 2013). The two were particularly surprised to see that a small group of students who had received "A's" in the course had failed to achieve the level of "proficient" on the state test. Bartlett and Harder expressed concern that they had been "lying" to those students and their parents (Bartlett, Harder, & Berglund, 2009). How could a student receive an "A" in a class oriented to state standards and yet not be able to respond with 60% accuracy on the state assessment? After discussion with their principal, Katie Berglund, the two piloted proficiency-based assessment in eighth grade pre-algebra. Their approach adhered to O'Connor's principles. Grades were based only on unit-test scores. While homework was not counted toward the grades, Harder and Bartlett did require that students complete all homework before retaking a test. The two made themselves available to students before and after school and at lunch to provide supplementary instructional support.

The following summer, Harder, Bartlett and Berglund repeated

the correlational analysis and saw two important changes. First, the grades were more strongly correlated with the state test results (r^2=.42) (Pekel, 2013) and second, no students who received an "A" in the course had failed to demonstrate proficiency. Using this pilot as a catalyst, Berglund, Harder, and Bartlett launched a school-wide shift toward proficiency-based grading. Throughout, Berglund skillfully supported Harder and Bartlett's teacher leadership as she cultivated district support, strengthened faculty acceptance, and educated parents about the initiative (see Pekel, 2013 for a full description).

Bringing Proficiency-Based Grading to a Teacher Preparation Course

These educators' experimentation and documentation had offered such a compelling case for incorporating proficiency-based grading in schools that I saw it as my responsibility to introduce future teachers to this practice. Now at the University of Portland, I decided to apply what I had learned to a new assignment: an assessment course for undergraduate elementary teacher candidates.

When I began planning for the course, I came to see that the resources available for teacher educators were not well integrated. If the popular textbooks on assessment that I reviewed mentioned proficiency-based grading at all, they offered little guidance for how to implement such an approach. Books and articles on grading practices, on the other hand, dealt minimally with assessment issues. If my students were to gain insight into the process, I decided I would have to develop an experiential approach that linked assessment and grading. I couldn't just give witness to the potential power of the approach; I needed to learn how to practice proficiency-based grading myself.

Defining Proficiency

Whether the practice is termed "standards-based" or "proficiency-based" grading, the principle is the same. A student is judged on her ability to demonstrate, *to a specified level of performance*, understanding or skill as articulated in a standard (or

portion of a standard). The first problem, of course, is what that specified level of performance should be. What will count as proficient?

I used two techniques to define proficiency in the course. In higher education, the process of determining course content is more reliant on the instructor's personal judgment than might be true in PK–12 settings, but that judgment is guided in most colleges by accreditation standards, course objectives, and unit-level frameworks (i.e. conceptual framework). In addition to the course description, I turned to InTASC Standard 6: "The teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress, and to guide the teacher's and learner's decision making." (CCSSO, 2011). Based on these guidelines and drawing on my selected textbook, Popham's (2011a) *Classroom Assessment: What Classroom Teachers Need to Know*, I established two main areas of focus: general assessment literacy and types of assessments. In a related article, Popham (2011b) defined assessment literacy usefully. "Assessment literacy consists of an individual's understandings of the fundamental assessment concepts and procedures deemed likely to influence educational decisions" (p. 267). I developed an initial list of concepts that I felt met this definition.

The second element that I used to define student proficiency was the concept of cognitive complexity. Designers of large-scale assessments operationalize cognitive complexity variously as "demands on thinking," "question-level demand" or "depth of knowledge" (Schneider, Huff, Egan, Gaines & Ferrara, 2013). Similarly, from a classroom perspective, defining a performance standard requires that an instructor articulate the level of thinking required by a task. Classroom teachers often turn to Bloom's 1968 taxonomy of learning objectives as a familiar framework for cognitive complexity, and, as discussed above, Bloom's taxonomy is well aligned with the theoretical underpinnings of proficiency-based grading. I chose to use an updated version of the taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) that provided clear guidelines for distinguishing among factual, conceptual, procedural, and

metacognitive knowledge (Krathwohl, 2002).

Using the concept of cognitive complexity allowed me to differentiate between those concepts that I wanted students to know, those I wanted them to apply, and those I wanted them to be able to act on creatively themselves. For instance, it was important that students could define the concept of content validity, but given the definition of assessment literacy I was aiming for, I also wanted to ensure that students could apply this concept to a realistic scenario they might encounter as professionals. On the other hand, for concepts like "norm"- or "criterion"-referenced tests I determined proficiency sufficient at the factual level (see Appendix A: Column 2). Another teacher educator might make different decisions about what aspects of assessment literacy should be developed to a certain level of cognitive complexity, but the process of choosing, and explicitly articulating my choices, was a prerequisite for implementing a proficiency-based approach in the course.

At the same time, defining the levels of cognitive complexity that I was hoping students to achieve showed that I could not successfully apply a proficiency-based approach to every assignment in the class. Given the goal that students create a wide variety of assessment types (formative assessments, multiple choice, performance assessments, and a portfolio), and the constraint of a fifteen-week semester, I decided to use traditional, rubric-based evaluation and grading for the complex assessments students would be asked to create. I applied the proficiency-based approach in only one strand of the course—the general assessment literacy dimension. This strand incorporated key concepts related to assessment design, purposes of assessment types, and interpretation of assessment information (Appendix A: Sample Student Proficiency Record, Columns 2, 4, & 5). The "proficiency" portion of the students' grade contributed 25% to the total semester grade. Exceeding proficiency on all items resulted in full-credit; achieving proficiency on all items resulted in 85% credit. Not meeting on one item reduced credit to 80%; not meeting on up to three items reduced the credit to 70%; not meeting on four or more items resulted in a failing grade (60%).

Implementation

Proficiency-based models emphasize the importance of summative tests, but also of allowing for retesting, or eliminating low scores with cumulative assessments. To demonstrate this approach for students, I designated three "check-up" assessments during the course with an optional supplement to the final exam for students who had not yet fully demonstrated proficiency. Each assessment "check-up" focused primarily on the information that had been addressed during that portion of the course. Factual or conceptual level items asked students to identify or define concepts. Application tasks engaged students in realistic problem-solving scenarios such as choosing between different types of assessments, placing students in instructional groups based on assessment results, or interpreting actual score reports (Appendix B: Sample Check-up).

After each "check-up" students received an individual printout showing whether they had exceeded proficiency (E), attained proficiency (P) or were not yet proficient (NYP) on tested concepts (Appendix A: Column 7). I created the individual proficiency records by first entering the students' scores in Excel. I entered the data in rows by student name, with item scores in the adjoining columns. This allowed me to interpret how well the class as a whole had responded to a certain item, an analysis I also modeled for the class. I used the spreadsheet to set up a mail merge document in Microsoft Word that generated the individual reports for each student, giving the concepts, item scores, and proficiency related to a concept; proficiency status was reported only for the highest level of cognitive complexity required for that concept.

With this information in hand, if I saw that a large group of students had not demonstrated proficiency on an item, I would establish differentiated groups during class time to offer instructional activities designed to clarify misconceptions. If smaller clusters or individual students were not yet proficient, I set up study times outside of class for a concept, or invited students to meet with me independently.

After the first "check-up," I demonstrated proficiency-based

grading by individualizing students' future assessments. A student who had demonstrated proficiency on all of the concepts would have only new concepts assessed on the next "check-up." A student who was not yet proficient on an item would be retested on that concept. My own assessment knowledge was stretched as I struggled to write new—and yet equivalent—items at the indicated level of cognitive complexity to re-assess concepts. Again, I employed Excel and the mail merge feature in Microsoft Word to create individualized assessments. Through the proficiency reports, communication about expectations and achievement was clear—not only in terms of a grade, but in terms of progress toward knowledge that students saw as important to them in their future professional practice.

Student results on personalized assessments demonstrated proficiency-grading directed effort toward learning. Students soon observed that not studying for an assessment was likely to mean they could not demonstrate proficiency. The consequence? On the next assessment, in addition to new content, concepts that hadn't been mastered would be reassessed. I remember one student looking down at her status report, noting the concepts she would see again on the next check-up and wryly commenting, "I guess you really want us to learn this stuff."

In two years, all but one of the students in the course did achieve proficiency on all of the concepts by the end of the semester. Every individual in both sections retested in at least one area at least once. Fewer than five in each section retested on multiple concepts multiple times. One student retested all three times on multiple concepts. The teacher candidates experienced the frustrations one of their own students might feel—of having to face a challenging concept yet *again* on the next "check up," but they also experienced the motivating lure of "not yet." Students saw the value in having another chance to show they could master concepts that had initially confused them. At the end of the course, one student wrote, "When I saw the list of assessment concepts at the beginning of the course, I thought there was no way I could ever learn all of that. But after each check-up, I saw my progress and it gave

me confidence. I did learn all of the concepts. I'm proud of myself" (Anonymous comment, Course Evaluation). Based on the results from two sections, incorporating proficiency-based assessment effectively supported my students' assessment literacy.

Implications

While implementing proficiency-based grading was challenging, I found the approach was powerful at illustrating key assessment concepts such as proficiency, content validity, reliability, and the relationship between assessment, curriculum, and instruction. Using my own assessments as illustrations (carefully designed, but imperfect, as all teacher-made assessments are) was invaluable for class discussion. The explicitness with which I was required to define proficiency for my students clearly illustrated to them how thoroughly individual professional judgment or the shared judgments of a professional community are integrated into assessment design and interpretation. By making my own decisions fully transparent to students in the form of their proficiency status reports, I could invite discussion about my decisions. Had I emphasized the concepts and skills that students were finding foundational in their practice? Had I expected enough? Or too much? With our shared experience at the center, the concept of assessment validity—content validity, construct validity, and consequential validity (Popham, 2011a)—became real to students.

Using proficiency-based assessment to teach proficiency-based assessment also allowed me to engage students in analyzing every step of the design process and to examine the logistics of scoring, of recording proficiencies, and of tailoring assessments to individual's proficiency levels. Using this illustration, we were able to brainstorm about how to address these logistical issues in an elementary classroom.

Finally, students saw firsthand that the assessment process was a guide for differentiated instruction as they participated in varied group assignments during class time or attended study groups and individual sessions offered outside of class. We could talk frankly and specifically about the time required to use this approach, but

we could balance that concern with recognition of the impact of the investment. Each of us experienced and interpreted proficiency-based grading from multiple perspectives: learner and teacher. Our collective inquiry brought the dynamic tension between theory and practice—a foundational aspect of teacher education in the liberal arts context—to life.

Conclusions

Implementing a proficiency-based system, even in one aspect of a single course, has taught me even more about the need to continually "plan backwards" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2006). Of course, I had believed that was what I had been doing all along. Pushing myself to specify goals in terms of their priority and to clarify the level of cognitive demand I expected moved me further down a path I thought I already knew well.

Perhaps the most important result of implementing this approach was a good solid serving of humility. As so many of my respected and hard-working colleagues in teacher preparation strive to do, I have always sought to practice what I preach. But honestly, implementing this discrete attempt at proficiency-based grading illuminated unanticipated complexities. Even though I hope that I convincingly advocated for proficiency-based grading through the model I offered, I couldn't fully show my students how demanding, time-consuming, or controversial implementing proficiency-based grading in their own classrooms or schools might be. I had undertaken a limited innovation in one course. Implementing this work on a yearlong basis, with other competing demands, questioning parents, and supportive or concerned colleagues, would be a wholly different matter.

To answer the question posed in the title of this paper, then, when teacher educators attempt to "practice what they preach" we may want to notice what we cannot achieve as much as what we can. As my experience demonstrates, our teacher candidates can benefit in multiple ways when teacher educators learn from colleagues in PK–12 settings and responsively incorporate their skillful practice in our programs. The first benefit can be immediate, as

our students derive some of the same positive learning effects that PK–12 educators documented in their classrooms and schools. My students' assessment literacy was deepened because of the proficiency-based approach I had learned from Bartlett and Harder's compelling example. The second benefit, though, cannot fully be realized until our candidates become teachers in their own right and are further mentored by our PK–12 partners. Preparation is truly an education when candidates are able to carry what they've learned into a professional community where they can apply, reevaluate, and extend initial understandings

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Appendix A: Sample Student Proficiency Report

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Item #	Concept	Cognitive complexity of task	General assessment literacy	Types of assessment	Item score	Proficiency status
4a	Cognitive complexity	Knowledge	Assessment design and use		2/2	
4b	Cognitive complexity	Application	Assessment design and use	Pre-assessment	2/5	NYP
9	Cognitive validity	Knowledge	Assessment design and use	Summative assessment	2/3	
10a	Cognitive validity	Application	Assessment design and use	Summative assessment	2/3	
10b	Cognitive validity	Application	Assessment design and use	Summative assessment	2/3	P
6	Construct validity	Application	Assessment design and use	Performance assessment	3/5	P
7	Predictive validity	Application	Assessment design and use	Performance assessment	1/5	NYP
1c	Stability reliability	Knowledge	Assessment design and use	Standardized test	2/3	P
3	Validity	Application	Assessment design and use	Pre-assessment	5/5	E
8a	Content standards	Knowledge	Curriculum relation to assess		0/2	NYP
8b	Performance standards	Knowledge	Curriculum relation to assess		0/2	NYP
1a	Percentile rank	Knowledge	Score interpretation	Standardized test	1/3	NYP
2a	Criterion referenced	Application	Score interpretation	Standardized test	2/2	
2c	Criterion referenced	Application	Score interpretation	Standardized test	2/2	E
1b	Grade equivalent	Knowledge	Score interpretation	Standardized test	3/3	E
2b	Norm-referenced	Application	Score interpretation	Standardized test	2/5	NYP
5	Standard error	Application	Score interpretation	Standardized test	5/5	E

Appendix B: Sample Check-Up

Check-Up Number One: Your Name:_____

1. A student's mother asks, "What does it mean when it says that Yvonne's percentile rank is 60?" The most accurate answer would be-
    a Yvonne is smarter than 60% of the other students in the class.
    b. Yvonne's score indicates that she correctly identified 60% of the items.
    c. Yvonne has mastered 60% of the criteria that are being assessed.
    d. Yvonne's score is higher than 60% of scores of other test-takers.
    e. Both b and c.
2. You are working with colleagues to evaluate whether a specific test would be an effective pre-assessment of student's mathematical knowledge and skill. One of your colleagues asks, "Do we have any information about the cognitive complexity of the items?"
    a. What does cognitive complexity mean in this context?
    b. Why might knowing about the cognitive complexity of test items be particularly important for a pre-assessment?
3. Carlo's parents are very concerned about his scores on a recent standardized test. They want to know whether he can be retested because they really believe he will get a better score. When you confer with your school counselor, she tells you that this test is very reliable (.7 stability reliability). Explain in terms a parent could understand whether this information indicates Carlo should or should not be retested.
4. A team of teachers are meeting to group all of the students in the grade level using individual test reports like the one below. These groupings will be used to create classes for differentiated reading instruction. Before the group starts to analyze the data, the team lead reminds the group that the standard error for this test was given as +/- 10. One teacher looks at Vijay's score (figure supplied) and says that given the standard error for the test, he should be put in the "meets" group rather than the "exceeds." How would you respond, and why?
5. Briefly define the difference between a "norm-referenced" and a "criterion-referenced" interpretation of test results.
6. On the report below (figure supplied) identify which of the numbered items is a criterion-referenced interpretation of the test results, and which is a norm-referenced interpretation. For each choice, explain your reason.
    a. Item C1 is a criterion-referenced norm-referenced interpretation because : (Circle one)
    b. Item C2 criterion-referenced norm-referenced interpretation because (Circle one)
    c. Item C3 criterion-referenced norm-referenced interpretation because
7. Name two criteria that help to define the concept of "formative assessment."

8. Evaluate the following scenario. Identify whether the scenario "qualifies" as a good example of a formative assessment. Explain your choice.

   Randy's first grade class has just begun a science unit on "sink and float." After reading some fiction and non-fiction texts about these concepts, the class is engaged in its first "hands-on" activity. Students are working in pairs and creating boats from a wide-variety of materials. Before they can "launch" their craft in the inflatable wading pool Randy has filled at the front of the room, they must come to him or the paraprofessional to answer a series of questions such as "Do you think this will float?" "What makes you think so?" Randy and the para record the information for each one of the groups. The students then must try it out and return to report whether their prediction was correct and why. After school, Randy sits down to look at the student's responses and plan for tomorrow. He divides the group into the "sinkers" and the "floaters." The "sinkers" receive the same task with the same materials; the floaters are given different materials that make creating a "floating" craft considerably harder.

   This example QUALIFIES or DOES NOT QUALIFY (circle one) as an example of formative assessment because . . .
9. If you said that Randy's scenario is NOT an example of a formative assessment, what would need to change so that it qualified? If you said it WAS an example of a formative assessment, what would need to be added to make it even stronger OR meet further criteria for formative assessment (e.g. Popham's levels)?

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Taking the Lead in Faculty Development: Teacher Educators Changing the Culture of University Faculty Development through Collaboration

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Abstract

As pedagogy experts, teacher educators should lead the charge for improved teaching and learning, but are under-utilized pedagogy resources in liberal arts universities. In this paper, the collaborators, one a teacher education assistant professor and the other an associate professor of art history, identify critical friendship group approaches (Allen & Blythe, 2004; McDonald, Mohr, Dichter, & McDonald, 2007) which have the potential to create transformative learning opportunities for liberal arts educators. Cross-disciplinary faculty partnerships hold promise for a sustainable, innovative approach to faculty development, with the potential to improve teaching and learning in liberal arts universities.

Keywords: **faculty development; pedagogy; K–12 expertise; critical friendship**

The 2014 Association of Independent Liberal Arts Colleges for Teacher Education (AILACTE) conference theme, *Catalyst for Change: Liberal Arts and Teacher Education,* acknowledges that universities are experiencing unprecedented waves of change which challenge practices, traditions, and perspectives that have historically gone unquestioned in institutions of higher learning. Particularly troubling is the questioning of the value, contributions, or sustainability of teacher education programs and colleges of education within the liberal arts university. In many states, long-standing and established teacher preparation programs have abruptly experienced unprecedented public scrutiny. Gonzalez and Carney (2014), for example, point to the negative impact of the media's use of ideologically charged rhetoric to influence policymakers' perceptions of teacher education, resulting in sweeping teacher licensure reforms in Indiana when schools of education were framed as inadequately preparing Indiana's teachers (p. 21).

Kimball (2013) notes that United States Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's (2009) call for teacher education reform and the proliferation of alternative licensure pathways like Teach for America for liberal arts graduates have called into question the relevance and necessity of locating teacher education programs within liberal arts universities. Observing that some universities have eliminated their colleges of education altogether, Kimball (2013) concludes that teacher preparation programs are more urgently needed than ever, especially in light of a shrinking pool of liberal arts students from which to recruit licensure candidates and the impending retirement of thousands of professional educators (National Commision on Teaching and America's Future, 2010).

But in addition to recruiting, retaining, and preparing future K–12 educators, what more might colleges of education contribute to the liberal arts university? This paper highlights the deep pedagogical knowledge held by teacher educators and focuses on the unique contribution teacher educators are poised to offer the university as a whole. Using a critical friendship approach (Adams & Peterson-Veatch, 2012; Dunne & Honts, 1998; Dunne, Nave, & Lewis, 2000; McDonald, Mohr, Dichter, & McDonald, 2007;

School Reform Initiative, n.d.), teacher educators can partner with university colleagues from other disciplines to slowly change and improve the teaching culture of a university. Working together, we hope to show the strength of interdisciplinary collaboration and what is possible when we choose to share our individual teaching practice and to work across knowledge bases, rather than remaining artificially divided and isolated into discipline-specific departments and programs.

Literature Review

Critical friendship groups have their origins in K–12 professional practice (School Reform Initiative, n.d.). A critical friendship group (CFG[1]) is a group of 6-10 professional educators that meets regularly to discuss professional practice, to listen carefully to one another, to ask thoughtful questions about teacher and/or student work, to collaborate on teaching dilemmas, and to surface, name, and excavate beliefs, practices or assumptions which inhibit effective teaching (Allen & Blythe, 2004; McDonald, et al., 2007). CFG practices and approaches have been shaped and informed by adult learning theory and by critical thinking.

Mezirow's (1991) landmark text, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*, has profoundly impacted those who create professional development for adults, thus the term "transformative learning" has been applied to nearly any kind of change. As Mezirow himself says however, "not all learning is transformative" (1991, p. 223). He defines transformative learning as "reflectively transforming the beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and emotional reactions that constitute our meaning schemes or transforming our meaning perspectives (sets of related meaning schemes) (1991, p. 223). He identifies three elements necessary for adult transformative learning: excavating and naming assumptions; exploring and taking on

1 The terms critical friendship group, Critical Friends Group, and CFG will be used interchangeably-an acknowledgement of the multiple, sometimes contested terms for these educator groups. An elaborate, detailed discussion of the legalities or political differences that are sometimes suggested by a particular choice of terms is beyond the scope of this article.

multiple perspectives; and engaging in critical reflection.

Mezirow claims that "Feelings of trust, solidarity, security, and empathy are essential preconditions for free full participation" in the discourse of transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 12-13). Like CFGs, transformative learning emphasizes "finding agreement, welcoming difference, 'trying on' other points of view, identifying the common in the contradictory, tolerating the anxiety implicit in paradox, searching for synthesis, and reframing" (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 12-13). This kind of discourse is what Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Trule (1986) have dubbed "real talk." Unlike normal conversation, "real talk" demands "careful listening; it implies a mutually shared agreement that together you are creating the optimum setting so that half-baked or emergent ideas can grow…reach[ing] deep into the experience of each participant…draw[ing] on the analytical abilities of each." (1986, p. 144).

Stephen Brookfield (2000) cautions against the rampant, careless use of the term "critical" if all that is meant is something which is rigorous, deep, or emotional. Brookfield contends that for reflection to also be critical, the learner must "engage in some sort of power analysis of the situation or context…[and] try to identify… hegemonic assumptions" (p. 126). More specifically, he states that "Critical theory views thinking critically as being able to identify, and then to challenge and change, the process by which a grossly iniquitous society uses dominant ideology to convince people this is a normal state of affairs" (2009, pp. 126-127).

Kegan's (1980; 1994; 2000; Kegan & Lahey, 2001) research on resistance to change connects his theory to Mezirow's theory of transformative adult learning and to transformational learning, stating that transformative learning represents "an epistemological change rather than merely a change in behavioral repertoire or an increase in quantity or fund of knowledge" (Kegan, 2000, p. 48). Kegan (2000) explores the roots of the word *trans-form-ative*, noting that the form itself is changed and not merely the content, likening traditional, informative learning to simply pouring new liquid (content) into an existing cup. No matter what is poured into the cup, the cup maintains its shape. By contrast, transformative

learning causes the cup itself to change its size, shape, color, etc. as a result of the content that is poured into it.

Processes and Approaches of CFGs

CFGs manage themselves through shared leadership and shared decision-making. Although CFGs are a form of professional learning community (PLC), specific dimensions, beliefs and practices set CFGs apart from other PLCs (Dufour, 2004; Dufour & Eaker, 1998). The work of CFGs differs from other kinds of PLCs in their explicit attention to the creation and maintenance of a safe space in which educators may engage in "open and honest conversation; meeting habits that support inquiry, dialogue, and reflection;…and facilitative leadership capable of encouraging participation, ensuring equity, and building trust" (McDonald, et al., 2007, p. 2).

While each CFG is unique, in general CFG's hold these precepts and practices in common (Adams & Peterson-Veatch, 2012):

- Voluntary membership
- Flattened hierarchy and shared responsibility
- Deep trust and confidentiality
- Members move toward a de-privatization of practice, voluntarily sharing teacher work, student work, and teaching dilemmas.
- Acknowledging the social, emotional and personal nature of sharing work
- Co-negotiated meeting agendas
- Working norms or agreements are established by the members of the group and are constantly examined for possible changes according to the needs and wishes of the group.
- Regular reflection on meeting content and processes inform next steps and future agendas.
- Protocols, or prescribed turn-taking mechanisms, are the methods used to structure activities and discussions during meetings.

CFGs create spaces in which educators enter into discomfort and embrace what Zembylas and Boler (2002) call a "pedagogy of discomfort in which to "move beyond inquiry as an individualized

process and raises issues of collective accountability by exploring the possibilities to embrace discomfort, establish alliances and come out of this process enriched with new emotional discursive practices" (2002, Patriotism Interrupted section, para. 18). CFGs choose to flatten the hierarchy generally associated with traditional meetings; this flattened hierarchy is maintained by the use of agreements. Agreements, or norms, specify ways the group will be, act, and work together, reflecting the goals, personalities, and needs of the individuals in balance with the needs of the group. McDonald, et al. (2007) stress that norms are meant to develop into habits of mind and ways of being which allow the members to experience purposeful discomfort, and "to view discomfort not as an avoidable aberration but as a necessary part of the learning process" (p. 19).

In summary, CFGs aspire to create spaces and opportunities in which adult learners can experience transformative learning using critical thinking in order to examine their teaching practice within a collegial community of support. Potential outcomes include new perspectives, examining and changing beliefs, and improving teaching and learning outcomes. CFGs may be composed of educators from within a particular school, department, or district, but also may include educators from across different settings and educational levels (elementary, secondary, university, etc.). Although Curry (2008) recommends that CFGs be formed within a specific department or discipline, in our experience, the most productive collaborations are possible when the group members represent a rich diversity of teaching roles and subject expertise.

The Beginnings of Our Collaboration

Susan is an assistant professor of middle and secondary education in the College of Education at Butler University, where Elizabeth is an associate professor of art history. We first met during a week-long CFG seminar facilitated by Susan in 2009. Elizabeth had been invited and urged to attend by another education colleague, but arrived with little understanding of the week's goals or approaches. To her great surprise, she found herself deeply engaged with other university colleagues, building new

collegial relationships and discussing substantive issues of teaching and learning. At the conclusion of this week-long seminar and over the next three years, we stayed in close contact and sought opportunities to collaborate whenever possible. At the conclusion of the 2012-2013 academic year, the Provost posted a call for faculty to apply for a new position, Faculty Development Fellow, initially envisioned for one faculty member to lead the university faculty in faculty development in a part-time capacity. We applied for the position together and proposed that we share the position, leveraging the power and possibility inherent in two faculty members sharing faculty development across two colleges and disciplines. This was extremely important because of the nature of Butler University, which features a mix of liberal arts and professional education, divided into six colleges that frequently inhibited cross-college engagement. The Provost agreed, sharing the vision for how the authors' diverse skills, experiences, and perspectives would inform faculty development.

Our differences are strengths that we believe both broaden and deepen the capacity of the Fellow position. Elizabeth is tenured, is entering her eighth year at Butler University, has broad visibility across different areas of campus, and is seen by faculty as enthusiastic, trustworthy and a natural creative thinker, but had no formal teacher training in graduate school. Susan is in her third year of tenure-track, previously was relatively unknown outside of her college, and has extensive professional development and teacher training experience. We represent two different colleges and two distinct disciplines, and are members of different networks of constituents and committees within the larger university community. However, we also bring complementary skill sets, dispositions, and faculty development commitments and were eager to merge these assets to spearhead relevant, timely, and data-informed faculty development engagements and resources. Together we share a strong sense of faculty development events which will be most inviting, effective and accessible to the majority of faculty members across the university's diverse perspectives.

Analysis of Faculty Needs

Prior to launching a plan for the 2013-2014 academic year, we collected and analyzed existing feedback and surveys collected from the faculty during the previous two academic years, during which time faculty development had been the purview of an Associate Provost. Analysis of faculty surveys and focus group responses indicated a strong desire for safe, supportive environments in which university faculty members could learn effective teaching methods, new approaches for increasing student engagement, and strategies for deepening student learning. Many respondents asked specifically for a teaching and learning center, a physical space in which vulnerability and risk could be explored without fear of evaluative reprisals.

Though currently no physical teaching and learning center exists at our university, the many requests for help with teaching, lesson design, and with creating authentic and effective classroom assessments indicated a collective readiness to move beyond traditional approaches for faculty development. In addition, we identified feelings of isolation and of a longing for collegial engagements specifically connected to teaching and learning, especially experiences that crossed disciplinary boundaries and utilized or shared non-discipline-specific pedagogies. Our shared Faculty Development Fellow position's open collaboration and explicit focus on teaching and learning is a radical departure from past practices which inadvertently privileged privacy of practice cloaked under the banner of academic freedom. These qualities were exacerbated by relatively new assessment developments that became interwoven with faculty evaluation, simultaneously making faculty hyper-aware of their teaching strengths and weaknesses and raising their levels of personal insecurities.

We inherited several discreet elements from the prior administrative-led faculty development, including a two-day new faculty orientation and a series of events aimed specifically at faculty to introduce them to resources on campus, a brown bag lunch series during which faculty reported on their recent research, and a series of events called "Food for Thought" that had a soft thematic focus

on pedagogical strategies. While we did not view each of these parts as equally valuable (and in fact did not believe that some parts were really "faculty development," but in reality were simply faculty presentation opportunities), we decided not to radically alter this structure. Maintaining existing programming provided a sense of stability for faculty in this relatively new faculty development environment. This familiarity allowed us to make strategic, creative changes in these existing elements and to introduce significant new events, many of which are described below.

Further, we found ourselves to be sought out by a wide range of faculty and university leaders who wanted to brainstorm ways to develop their own faculty development events. We also engaged extensively with the academic instructional technology support staff, brainstorming ways to create shared faculty development.

Our current faculty development approaches are founded upon critical friendship group principles. As Susan (Adams & Peterson-Veatch, 2012) has written elsewhere, CFGs:

> revolutionized our teaching, our professional relationships, our friendships, our parenting of our own children and our individual understandings of ourselves….the group processes and "social technologies" we practice in these groups serve not only to bond the group's members to one another, but serve to create a commitment to one another and one another's students that invites us to dive deeply to those places in ourselves that we rarely visit, places where our assumptions live and rest unexamined, protecting us from whatever forces might "dis-integrate" us…our groups aim to become places in which we can critically examine instructional decisions to surface assumptions that influence instructional design. (p. 33)

As we described earlier, CFGs are spaces in which educators can safely make themselves vulnerable to do the hard work of excavating previously unexamined assumptions about philosophy, pedagogy, and epistemology, all of which can unconsciously drive instructional design and pedagogical decisions when left unnamed

and unnoticed. The "social technologies" of structured turn-taking, learning to ask carefully constructed questions, and realizing over time that colleagues will reliably keep confidences come together to create this safe, productive space.

While Susan had extensive work with critical friendship, Elizabeth had limited experience, but importantly had attended a week-long CFG workshop during which she had a transformational experience, so she was comfortable promoting the approach. This group was facilitated by Susan and was composed of ten local secondary teachers, four College of Education faculty members from Butler University, and two university faculty members from other colleges. This five-day workshop introduced norm-setting, dilemma protocols, protocols for looking at teacher and student work, and reflective responses to challenging texts. Elizabeth was astonished to discover how quickly trust was developed and how much she learned about her own teaching practice within such a diversity of teaching roles and disciplines. Like this week-long workshop's approach, the university faculty development events we designed and facilitated for 2013-2014 sought to create a theoretical space in which faculty participants were safe to examine assumptions, reveal vulnerabilities, and try on new teaching identities within a collegial, collaborative, and supportive interdisciplinary setting.

Getting Started

The academic year commenced with the Provost's gathering of the faculty, academic staff members, and academic administrators for a morning just prior to the first day of classes. Although attendance is voluntary, most faculty members make a point of attending this kick-off to the new academic year. The group included full-time faculty, adjuncts and instructors, deans, associate deans, the Associate Provost, and directors and staff members from academic divisions like Student Disability Services, Academic Affairs, and the Learning Resource Center. At this event, Susan led the nearly 300 participants in a custom-designed thinking, writing, and talking protocol in which each participant had time to excavate and refine

inquiry questions emerging from her/his own teaching practice. Each step of the protocol allowed participants to identify specific steps, resources, and supports necessary to sustain a personal inquiry cycle over the academic year.

Using an existing CFG protocol (School Reform Initiative, n.d.) as a model, a customized protocol was developed for the event. Thoughtful and generative questions embedded in recursive rounds of reflective writing and partner sharing provided support for participants to sketch out an initial plan for a year-long cycle of experimentation, exploration, implementation, revision, assessment, and evaluation, with the process potentially producing new questions which generate emergent and deepening inquiry cycles. Here below we outline the steps and the process of the Inquiry Cycle Development Protocol.

Inquiry cycle development protocol process and prompts

Participants were asked to pull chairs close together into groups of three. A PowerPoint program revealed each question on a large screen. Participants prepared to respond to each prompt in writing as it was revealed on the screen. Participants were asked to keep their writing hand moving the entire writing time, to get their thoughts down without corrections or self-censorship. They were also asked to commit to listening to one another without interruption. Talking was limited to sharing what was produced during writing rounds. Time was kept strictly for each round of writing, speaking, and listening. Each of the following steps was featured individually on the big screen to allow participants to focus on one question at a time.

The opening writing prompt asked participants to respond silently in writing to these questions:

> *What is one element of your (teaching, program, leadership, etc.) with which you feel dissatisfied, frustrated, bored, or insecure? What is it about this element that has caused you to feel this way? Why is this element important to you?*

At the conclusion of the three minutes, each member of the triad

read aloud his/her reflection writing with no response from the others. This was followed by a second round writing prompt:

> *What supports, resources, conditions, and/or collaborations do you need in order to explore, engage and experiment with the element you identified in Round 1? Where do these supports, resources, conditions, and/or collaborations already exist? How will you gain access? Who might help you? How will you begin?*

Again, each member of the triad simply read aloud his/her reflection writing with no response from the others. This was then followed by a third round writing prompt:

> *At the end of the year, how will you know your exploration, engagement and experimentation with your element were successful? What outcomes do you hope for? How will you celebrate your success? What new questions will emerge from your inquiry?*

Once again, each member of the triad read aloud his/her reflection writing with no response from the others. A fourth writing round then commenced:

> *On the provided calendar, map your steps across an academic year. Identify and tentatively schedule events, meetings, or timeframes for:*
>
> - *Identifying collaborators;*
> - *Locating resources;*
> - *Experimentation or implementation cycles;*
> - *Data collection and data analysis cycles;*
> - *Requesting and gathering collegial feedback;*
> - *Sharing and publishing outcomes and new learning;*
> - *Identifying new questions for future inquiry; and*
> - *Celebrating an exciting, relevant, and productive year of inquiry.*

After calendars were completed, each person shared the map with their triad partners. This was followed by a final prompt in the fifth round:

> *At the bottom of the organizer, identify 3 specific people by name to whom you commit to contacting within the next*

24 hours to explain your inquiry cycle plan and to request accountability, support, and collaboration.

It was exciting and gratifying to observe the energy and level of engagement of the participants during the writing and talking portions of the protocol. Nearly 300 people were seated at round tables in a ballroom setting. During the writing cycles, heads were bent over notebooks or laptops, feverishly writing in silence. Body language during talking and listening cycles indicated interest in hearing the ideas and questions of others as participants leaned close and listened carefully. During Round 5, many decided to ask their triad partners to serve as accountability partners, not simply out of convenience, but because after an hour of working together, participants often felt invested in the success of their partner's inquiry project.

Prior to the Provost's gathering, we shared some anxiety about how this new approach might be received by the university's academic community. In previous gatherings, it was not uncommon for the Provost to be verbally challenged or questioned about policy decisions; in fact, these moments of confrontation, though generally not combative, were often eagerly anticipated as part of the tradition of the gathering. Our goal was to make productive use of the time, to set a new tone for faculty development, and to allow each participant to develop a plan that would allow a closing of the loop, beginning with the identification of the inquiry question in August to celebrating the new learning in April. Nothing like this had ever been done before. To make matters even more challenging, Elizabeth was traveling abroad on this date and was not physically available to stand together with Susan to facilitate the protocol. To say we were nervous was an understatement.

To our great relief, almost everyone participated with enthusiasm and good will. When one person called attention to herself by laughing loudly in the middle of a writing round, she was soundly ignored by nearly every other person in the room, a response she had not expected. Follow-up surveys were overwhelmingly positive; most said the time was well spent and that this was the best

gathering they had ever attended.

In the two weeks immediately following this session, more than 30 individuals approached Susan to request a copy of the Inquiry Cycle PowerPoint presentation to adapt it for use in their work or in their teaching. Many of these reported using the protocol in classrooms with great success. One staff director used the protocol with her entire staff in an academic division and reported that the process opened doors to richer discussion and to greater clarity of purpose. Academic staff teaching exploratory classes for incoming students successfully adapted the Inquiry Cycle so that undeclared major students gained personal clarity on majors that would best suit their skills and interests. A communications professor made slight adaptations in the questions and used the protocol to introduce an inquiry project in her undergraduate course, reporting that students found the writing, listening, and talking rounds gave them time to think deeply about their projects.

Supporting Pedagogical Inquiry and Innovation During the Academic Year

At the conclusion of the Inquiry Cycle protocol, participants left with a plan to continue thinking about and working on their identified Inquiry Cycle question for the academic year. They also left with a printed schedule of the year's monthly events sponsored by the Faculty Development Fellows, which included workshops on teaching topics such as getting to know our students, engagement strategies that really work, and approaches for creating authentic assessment of student learning. Each of these sessions were co-hosted and co-facilitated by both of us; each session included a wide variety of university faculty known for good teaching practices. Many of the featured presenters were teacher education faculty who were delighted to find their university colleagues eager to learn new teaching strategies and approaches with explicit steps and advice from K–12 pedagogy experts.

One Saturday morning session invited faculty members to bring with them a specific teaching dilemma for individual consultation protocols facilitated by education faculty members experienced

in critical friendship approaches. Making oneself vulnerable by revealing a teaching dilemma requires careful facilitation and the creation of sufficient trust amongst group members so the dilemma presenter can be honest and transparent about their issue without fear of ridicule or gossip.

Elizabeth shared a current significant dilemma in her art history survey classroom that had arisen in part from flipping the classroom using technology, changing the pedagogy from lecture to discussion, creative activities, and assigning students to "teach" the material to each other using activities they designed themselves. The class had the added pressure of being the only required art history course and spanning an enormous time period from prehistory to postmodernism in a single semester.

Because Elizabeth believes strongly in diversity, visual culture from around the world was added to the course, creating even more challenge. The agency assigned to the students to develop learning activities about cultures other than their own inadvertently created a condition in which students could potentially represent other cultures and religions disrespectfully as students struggled to develop learning activities that their classmates would consider fun. Elizabeth presented the dilemma and anonymous examples of student writing in a fishbowl setting that allowed participants to learn the protocol process used, as well as the language and tone of the talk produced in the protocol. She also spoke openly about the value and transformative power of making her teaching practice more transparent within a critical friendship group setting, which allowed novice participants to relax and try the dilemma protocol with less apprehension.

One of the most pleasant surprises was the level of attendance and participation in faculty development events by academic staff members not directly responsible for classroom teaching. Unbeknownst to us, academic staff had previously sometimes been left off of distribution lists or had even been quietly discouraged from engaging in faculty development events in the past. Our commitment to including all academic personnel – whether tenured,

tenure-track, instructors, adjunct, or Learning Resource Center staff members – was received warmly and established a new sense of welcome, creating opportunities for cross-collaboration for all stakeholders in the university. At the conclusion of several events, academic staff members' feedback indicated appreciation for opportunities to engage directly in discussions of pedagogy and for gaining direct access to important information previously unavailable to them.

It was important to us to end the year as we had begun, by returning to the Inquiry Cycle plans created back in August. Near the end of the academic year, the Faculty Development Fellows hosted an exciting new event, the Celebration of Innovation in Teaching. A call for proposals invited all teaching faculty to share teaching innovations, whether big or small, at a festive, open event in which attendees circulated, asked questions of presenters, and gathered new ideas for their own teaching while congratulating the presenters on their innovations. Presenters brought video, photographs, student work artifacts, and assessment ideas developed and test-driven during the year. Fancy appetizers, wine, door prizes, and good company made this event a rousing success. Plans are already in place to host the Celebration of Innovation in Teaching again in 2015. Fittingly, in the inclusive spirit of the faculty development events, the 2015 Celebration will also include presentations by academic staff members.

Conclusion

Though this shared Faculty Development Fellow role is still in its infancy, at the conclusion of Year 1 we already are seeing early signs of a changing faculty culture. Language shifts, a willingness to talk about failed approaches in supportive settings, and the sustained engagement of faculty members from many programs, departments and colleges all suggest that we are heading in a fruitful direction. Survey data and exit ticket evidence continue to emerge that our approach of keeping the conversation open, collegial, and transparent is one way to create conditions for meaningful and sustainable change in our teaching practice.

The power of faculty development being created and led by a cross-disciplinary partnership lent credibility and fostered creativity; two heads really are better than one. Elizabeth tapped her network across the other five colleges at the university to strategically invite faculty members to experience critical friendship thinking and approaches. Susan, as a member of the College of Education faculty, invited many of her education colleagues to share ideas for engagement, discussion protocols, projects, and assessments in faculty development events, shining light on the expertise of the teacher education faculty. After all, in the liberal arts university no one is better prepared to foster this collegial, collaborative environment than teacher educators who understand well the power and impact of critical friendship approaches.

As universities face increased pressure to make pedagogical changes to improve student learning for their continued future viability, faculty-led and faculty-created teaching and learning discourse holds great promise. In addition, leading the charge for meaningful faculty development offers colleges of education and teacher educators the opportunity to make available their pedagogical knowledge and skills, and to improve university teaching and learning through collaboration with university colleagues across all disciplines.

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Life on the Reservation: Cross-cultural Field Experiences and Student Learning

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Abstract

Twenty-first century classrooms are filled with increasingly diverse student populations. Effective teacher preparation programs must include explicit course work in culturally responsive pedagogies and field experiences that place educators in new sociocultural contexts. Field experiences in cross-cultural, place-based settings have the potential to help educators recognize injustice and develop empowering practices (Baldwin, Buchanan, & Rudisill, 2007; Greenwood, 2008; Smith, 2007; Smith & Sobel, 2010). In this article, we describe our recent collaboration with Oglala Lakota College (OLC) and the Center for American Indian Research and Native Studies (CAIRNS) to provide both undergraduate teacher candidates and graduate students with rich, field-based cross-cultural experiences. We discuss the research and theories shaping this collaboration and describe the formation of these partnerships. Student learning in both the undergraduate and graduate field experiences indicates how spending intensive time in a unique cultural setting can promote critical thinking about the self, the world, and the role of educators in creating change.

Keywords: **cross-cultural, field experience, teacher candidate, Lakota, social change**

Professional schools housed within liberal arts institutions are faced with the challenge of bridging the gap between a liberal and professional education. For schools of education, this task involves balancing between preparing students for standardized accreditation benchmarks and preparing them to be critical, dynamic thinkers with a broad knowledge base and an understanding that thinking and learning are essential to living a fulfilling life. Our institution embraces a liberal arts tradition steeped in social justice. We strive to prepare students who understand "the interconnectedness of all life and human solidarity across ethnic and social divisions" ("The University's Mission," n.d., para. 5) and can act as change agents for social justice. As part of this mission, our university has worked to establish a strong international program and more than 35% of our students participate in an international experience during their tenure. Our mission is consistent with the goal of preparing teachers to work in diverse schools and, as Villegas (2007) asserts, who "are resolved to teach their students equitably [and] understand existing barriers to learning that children and youth from low-income and racial/ethnic minority backgrounds consistently encounter in school" (p. 372). Achieving this goal requires that teacher preparation programs design explicit course work in culturally responsive pedagogies as well as field experiences that place educators in new sociocultural contexts. Field experiences in diverse, cross-cultural, place-based settings have the potential to help educators recognize injustice and develop empowering practices (Baldwin, Buchanan, & Rudisill, 2007; Greenwood, 2008). When these field experience are situated in ecologically and culturally distinct contexts, students are able to see the interconnectedness of education and place—what Smith and Sobel (2010) describe as "the human and more-than-human" (p. 21) elements needed to create socially just societies.

In this article, we describe our recent collaboration with Oglala Lakota College (OLC) and the Center for American Indian Research and Native Studies (CAIRNS) in order to provide both undergraduate teacher candidates and graduate students with rich, field-based cross-cultural experiences. We begin by discussing

the research and theories shaping this collaboration, then describe the steps we took to create these partnerships. Following this, we describe the unique goals, contexts, and student learning in both the undergraduate and graduate field experiences. We conclude the article by discussing the continued evolution of these partnerships and the significance of our students' learning.

Culturally Responsive Practice and Cross-Cultural Experiences

The decades-old drive for multicultural education that focused on recognition and inclusion has shifted to a more intentional paradigm of culturally responsive pedagogy that relies on educators connecting to students' backgrounds, building on students' home dialects and languages, planning for dialogic instruction, attending to classroom discourse, and maintaining a rigorous curriculum (McIntyre, Hulan, & Layne, 2010). Sleeter's (2001) review of research examining preservice teachers' preparation to work in culturally diverse schools emphasized White teachers' deficit of cross-cultural knowledge despite recognizing the likelihood of teaching diverse students. Culturally responsive pedagogy requires that educators understand the cultural practices and backgrounds of diverse students (Gay, 2002). Gay (2002) and others (Reyhner, Lee, & Gabbard, 1993; Sleeter, 2001) assert that this understanding should not only include factual information about different racial/ethnic groups, but also expand sociocultural and historical knowledge as well. Cultural and historical understandings rooted in place-based contexts can help students recognize the assets and strengths of communities and counteract deficit perspectives focused on weaknesses. For Native American students, who already experience a dissonance as they move from school to home, a capabilities perspective is particularly important (Thornton & Sanchez, 2010). Reyhner et al. (1993) recognized that without a common cultural understanding, non-Native teachers in American Indian schools would struggle to create a context for learning and potentially place students in a no-win situation where they may have to choose between home and school cultures.

Knowledge of cultural backgrounds and practices includes developing a keen awareness and critical examination of how different diverse populations are represented in pop culture and mass media (Gay, 2002). The social wallpaper of today's technology-driven world communicates questionable value-laden images and messages about diverse students that have the potential to feed preconceived notions and stereotypes to teacher candidates (Baldwin et al., 2007; Gay, 2002). Educators must be able to recognize and deconstruct these damaging messages if they are to move beyond a deficit perspective and recognize the funds of knowledge their students create and utilize. Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) define funds of knowledge as "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills" (p.133) essential for individuals and communities to thrive. Recognizing that every student enters the classroom with a body of knowledge derived from cultural and familial roots is essential to culturally responsive pedagogy and teaching for social justice.

Cross-cultural field experiences, when created in partnership with communities they serve, have the potential to help educators develop a deeper understanding of diverse students, recognize their own preconceived notions, and engage in socially just practices (Baldwin et al., 2007; Stachowski & Mahan, 1998). Research has been conducted with both service learning projects where students work with out-of-school tutoring and intervention programs (Baldwin et al., 2007) and student teaching in reservation-based boarding schools (Stachowski & Mahan, 1998). Baldwin et al.'s research found that tutors challenged their beliefs about the capabilities of diverse students and reported learning as much from their pupils as their pupils learned from them. Stachowski and Mahan (1998) found that teacher candidates gained a broader world-view and reported similar reciprocal learning between teacher candidates and students. Both cross-cultural experiences fostered community involvement where the teacher candidates interacted with a variety of community members within and beyond school walls. In one study (Stachowski & Mahan, 1998), this community immersion enabled teacher candidates to deepen their cultural understanding

and glean knowledge and insight from non-educators—an experience outside the realm of traditional student teachers and one highly valued by cross-cultural candidates. Further, both of these studies reflected what Wade (2000) recommends for collaboratively-created service learning experiences: projects must be mutually beneficial and equitably framed where both educator and the community share common goals. This permeable relationship between school learning and place-based learning approaches the process Gruenwald (2003) and Smith (2007) call decolonization, through which educators challenge their own assumptions about power and education within particular communities.

In creating the cross-cultural experiences for our students, we hoped to address the call of these scholars by deepening our teacher candidates' and graduate students' understanding of diverse populations through intensive experiences rooted in the particular culture of Lakota peoples in South Dakota. For our teacher candidates, we wanted to create a cross-cultural student teaching experience. For our graduate students, all enrolled in a Ph.D. program focused on education and social change, we wanted to create a cross-cultural experience examining the manifestations of culture, poverty, and social change in a unique local context. Our undergraduate candidates tend to believe that poverty only occurs across oceans and in remote places in the world; they have limited to no experience with poverty inside our country. Further, they are often unaware of the multi-faceted and diverse subcultures within American society. Our Ph.D. students are well aware of social injustice and challenges facing individuals living in poverty, but they tend to approach these issues from a myopic perspective that diminishes culture as an asset. Specifically, we hoped to develop both undergraduate and graduate students' knowledge of American Indian reservations, foster an understanding of the poverty and barriers to education these students and community members face, enable recognition of the cultural and community attributes that empower individuals, and move students beyond problem recognition to embrace socially just pedagogies and practice. In addition to cultivating culturally responsive practices in our students, we sought partnerships that

embodied reciprocity—partnerships where our students' involvement would benefit the local community as much as the local community would teach our students. The following section describes how these partnerships were formed.

Forming the Partnerships

First, we sought out a partnership with a tribal university housed inside an American Indian reservation with the goal of establishing student teaching placements for our undergraduate teacher candidates. Through research, Oglala Lakota College (OLC) in Kyle, South Dakota on the Pine Ridge Reservation was identified as a possible partner. OLC is a four-year institution with an existing Department of Education preparing initial certification candidates. OLC was established in 1974 through charter by The Oglala Sioux Tribal Council. Appealing most to our faculty was the Vision Statement of OLC: *Rebuilding the Lakota Nation through Education* ("Statement of Vision," n.d., para. 1). The first author contacted the dean at OLC and determined they would be open to creating a partnership and facilitating placement of student teachers on Pine Ridge Reservation. Through OLC, we obtained placements for two student teaching candidates at the reservation's Little Wound School. Upon hearing about graduate students interested in studying issues of equity and social change in South Dakota, the dean of OLC suggested the second author contact the Center for American Indian Research and Native Studies (CAIRNS). CAIRNS, located in Martin, South Dakota and equidistant from the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations, is an "Indian-controlled, nonprofit research and education center that is committed to advancing knowledge and understanding of American Indian communities and issues important to them" (Center for American Indian Research and Native Studies, 2012, para. 1). The director of CAIRNS was interested in the graduate student experience and wanted to help students distinguish between the culture of poverty and Lakota culture as well as introduce students to social change initiatives on both the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations. The director worked with the second author to create an experience

where graduate students built an understanding of Lakota history and culture, then engaged in field-based inquiry examining how community members on both reservations have acted to initiate and sustain positive social change.

Two Reservations

These new partnerships enabled our undergraduate teacher candidates and our graduate students to temporarily immerse themselves in culturally and historically rich contexts steeped in the challenges of poverty. Both groups of students had never spent any time on American Indian reservations and, for the majority of these students, this experience was their first time west of the Mississippi.

Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is located in the southwest corner of South Dakota and is the second largest reservation in the United States, incorporating 2,800,000 acres or 11,000 square miles. The unemployment rate on Pine Ridge is approximately 89% and about 97% of the population lives below federal poverty levels (US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Tribal Services, 2005). Pine Ridge Reservation schools have been in the bottom 10% of school funding, teacher turnover has been reported as high as 800% that of the U.S. national average, and the dropout rate among K-12 students is around 70% (Schwartz, 2002). According to the 2010 census, 42.4% of the population on Pine Ridge is under the age of twenty, emphasizing the dire need for effective educational practices that foster student success (U.S. Census Bureau).

Rosebud Reservation consists of twenty communities with a tribal enrollment of 24,217. It incorporates 883,874 acres or 1,381 square miles, which represents 15% of the Great Plains ("Rosebud Agency," n.d., para. 1). The American Indian Relief Council reports that residents experience an unemployment rate upwards of 80%, one out of three are homeless, and as many as six out of ten residents on Rosebud Reservation live in substandard housing ("South Dakota: Rosebud Reservation," n.d., para.). There is one hospital with thirty-five beds. Mission, South Dakota is within

Rosebud and is home to Sinte Gleska University. Like Pine Ridge, the 2010 census reported 43.6% of the population on Rosebud is under the age of twenty (U.S. Census Bureau). Together, Pine Ridge and Rosebud have the highest concentration of Teach for America teachers in the United States.

Undergraduate Experience and Student Learning

In August 2013, two teacher candidates arrived in Kyle, South Dakota with the first author, who acted as their university supervisor. The students were placed with two general education elementary teachers at Little Wound School for a ten-week student teaching experience. Little Wound is a tribal school on Pine Ridge Reservation with grades from kindergarten through twelfth housed in one location. The school educates approximately 600 students. One candidate was in a kindergarten classroom and the other was in a third grade classroom. The students were provided with faculty housing by Little Wound, which consisted of a two-bedroom house located in close proximity to the school. The university supervisor from OLC arranged for furniture to be loaned to the students for their stay. The first author stayed for an initial four-day set up period and then returned two more times for three-day visits during the placement.

Students kept journals throughout their time at Little Wound and reflected on their experiences upon returning. Their reflections reveal both personal and professional growth as educators as well as a deepened understanding of the experiences and needs of Lakota students and their community. When discussing what the experience on Pine Ridge meant to them as teachers, they reported, "I remembered why I wanted to be a teacher," and "I brought all of what I learned into the classroom." They expressed that they were able to connect with the classroom and students in a very "deep way." When discussing the children they met, one stated, "The kids, they just LOVE so much, they want all of you every day." One also noted that for many children on Pine Ridge "school is an escape" and "provides a safe place." When asked about the community of people on Pine Ridge, one stated, "Their (Lakota)

struggle isn't over, nobody talks about it anymore but it is real." Both students expressed shock about the overt racism they experienced when they visited the surrounding areas to Pine Ridge. When visiting areas off the reservation, there were times when non-native people made disparaging remarks about Pine Ridge residents upon hearing why these candidates were in South Dakota. One student stated, "I just had to leave the store, the things she was saying were so rude, I just walked out." She went on to say, "It's like they live right there beside the reservation and they don't even see that there are *people* in there."

Learning outcomes for the pilot of this program evolved throughout the experience. Our initial goal of creating a cross-cultural experience within American soil was successfully accomplished. The candidates developed a greater awareness of and appreciation for diversity within America. They reported that they had the opportunity to "apply previous learning, see a school where the testing is not the main focus, and have a real impact." One of them stated that the best thing she learned was, "Not all school problems are equal." She said that typical classroom issues in the schools of her home community no longer seemed to be a "big deal." The other student stated that she was confident that she could handle unexpected student needs as a result of her experiences on Pine Ridge. One went on to say, "Social justice requires active involvement because there really are people suffering in America." Most significant to one student was gaining an awareness that people do not simply choose to live in impoverished circumstances. She stated, "this is just all they know, all they have lived and I understand that the Lakota are connected to the land and each other."

Graduate Experience and Student Learning

While the undergraduate field experience focused on student teaching, the graduate experience used an inquiry approach where students immersed themselves in Lakota culture to better understand the manifestations of culture, poverty, and social change on the Rosebud and Pine Ridge reservations. Four graduate students arrived in Martin, South Dakota at the end of June 2013 and began

a 14-day experience that consisted of two phases. First, students participated in an intensive four-day seminar in Lakota culture to begin to understand the Lakota relationships with each other, the land, spirituality, and history. This seminar included intensive course readings, lectures, and discussions designed to give students a context for their field experiences. The second phase consisted of six days of field-based meetings with a variety of community members on both reservations: educational leaders, business developers, healthcare workers, small business owners, court advocates, and housing assistance supervisors. The purpose of these meetings was to help students investigate the relationships between culture, social structures, and social change initiatives in the realms of healthcare; financial development and support systems; housing resources; and early childhood, K–12, and higher education. The students also spent four days visiting several significant sites in the Badlands and the Black Hills to further understand the Lakota connection to the land and history. Students approached their field-based experiences by examining how particular agents of change experienced the intersections of history, community, culture, and social justice. Students sought to understand not only the tension between social change initiated from outside of the community and social change as organic to the community, but also to draw distinctions between Lakota culture and the trappings of poverty.

Students took an ethnographic approach to their fieldwork by maintaining a digital field journal of their observations and conversations with change agents. While in the field, students used notebooks to record observations and snippets of speech captured from conversations with the different community members they met. Each day they returned from the field to write up their notes, debrief their learning with the CAIRNS director and staff, and collaborate to make sense of their discoveries. They used a digital medium of their choice (i.e. blogs, Google docs, etc.) to write up their field notes and share their thinking with each other. Sharing their thinking enabled students to check each other's accuracy and build understanding through collaboration. This digital text along with their rough field notes, readings, and lectures acted as the raw

material for final papers and presentations sharing the summary and findings of their experience.

Graduate student learning reflected three central themes: 1) an increased awareness of Lakota and American Indian history, 2) a critical eye towards representation of American Indians, and 3) new perspectives on the relationships of social change within particular cultural contexts. The first two themes developed simultaneously as students learned about Lakota origin stories, treaties, battles for land and religious freedoms, and the fraught history of education policies. As students learned about Lakota culture, they began to make connections between culture, representation, and social power.

Learning about Lakota history and culture provided a powerful framework for students to recognize what one student explained as "how many of the things we hear/see/learn about Native Americans tend to be oversimplified" and the damage created through this false understanding. Students also realized how the Lakota perspective is frequently missing from area visitor centers and museums. One student wrote, "Few museums capture the historical perspective of the Lakota people in an intentional and impactful way." Another student connected this lack of representation to disempowerment: "It is interesting how this [Martin Heritage] Center was based on one people's point of view. It is a little more meaningful than this because I believe oppressed people are left out of many stories." Another student hypothesized that the challenge of portraying a complex culture may foster reductive perspectives: "Perhaps it is not possible to capture a culture in a museum as it is the stories, people, and landmarks that bring the true story to life." Developing a keener awareness of how culture is communicated led students to question not only local representations of Lakota culture, but how American Indians are represented in popular culture. Students happened to be in South Dakota during the release of the most recent film version of the Lone Ranger. The presence of movie posters featuring Johnny Depp as Tonto prompted one student to write, "I was struck by the inappropriateness and fledgling attempts of this film to say it was created with 'fun' in mind. The lack of authenticity and poking fun of cultural

traditions perpetuates stereotypes and undermines the culture." For these students, knowledge of Lakota history and culture fostered a more critical awareness of inclusion and representation.

The first two themes became a catalyst that pushed students to question the potentially narrow role of change agents in particular cultural settings. Students discussed the nature of a deficit perspective so frequently adopted by individuals who hope to work for social good; a singular focus on challenge and lack of resource can blind one to the power of culture. As one student explained:

> Driving through a local reservation, which contains within its boundaries one of the ten poorest counties in the United States, I saw the crumbling structures amid the empty, rusty carnage of old appliances and automobiles, evidence of the abject poverty in the way I, as a white, middle class American, would have judged had the cultural immersion course not created a new awareness in me. The Lakota have a history, a holistic view of the world, kinship values and a spirituality that links them inextricably together.

Another student reflected similarly by asserting that working for social change requires change agents who take time to pay attention to how "equity, values of culture, and impacting change in an appropriate manner" converge. This student recognized that without attention to culture, "one may be so focused on changing to make things better that he or she fails to celebrate and come to understand what is valuable in a culture." Without cultural awareness, change agents may work under "assumptions that the Lakota Indians need to be saved from impoverished circumstances. This trip has underscored the importance of not enmeshing culture and poverty. This enmeshment develops dangerous assumptions and denigrates culture." Social change, according to these students, must include "striving to develop a knowledge base and taking time to meet and listen to people from the culture" if it is to take root and sustain itself.

Conclusion

Our students returned from South Dakota with a deeper cultural knowledge and appreciation for the complex relationship between social justice and educational practice. Their awareness of Native American culture was broadened and their beliefs about equity and historical perspective have been shifted away from simply what they learned in history class. Our students met a proud people with a proud heritage and came back with an understanding that Native American culture is not a culture of poverty. Poverty is a cyclical circumstance in which the Lakota were placed and held for one hundred and fifty years. Knowledge about and understanding of the true situation is what creates cross-cultural learning rather than volunteerism experiences. As the world becomes smaller and educators are asked to expand their knowledge base to work with diverse students, cross-cultural field experiences have the potential to act as powerful catalysts for learning in this deep and meaningful way. Our students demonstrated how spending intensive time in a unique cultural setting promotes critical thinking about the self and the role of educators in creating change.

We intend to continue American cross-cultural experiences for both undergraduate teacher candidates and Ph.D. students. For our teacher candidates, we plan to expand this opportunity to all initial certification candidates from twelve undergraduate initial certification programs and eleven graduate Master of Arts in Teaching programs. The assignments on Pine Ridge will also be expanded to last an entire semester and incorporate placements in special education settings as well as regular education settings for dual certified candidates. For our Ph.D. students, the second author has worked with the director at CAIRNS to increase the number of students visiting South Dakota, expand field experiences, and support students who wish to conduct formal research on the reservations. Both partnerships are still in their early stages and both authors look forward to their continued development.

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Preservice Teacher Preparation for Common Core Standards and Assessments: A Pilot Study

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Abstract

Teacher preparation programs face great challenges in ensuring their graduates are prepared for the demands of today's classrooms. The authors explore how teacher accountability has evolved based upon federal legislation leading to adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Recognizing that future teachers will be held accountable for preparing students for CCSS, a test based on the standards was used to determine what this type of evaluation means to future teachers. Teacher candidates' impressions of a sample CCSS-based assessment are investigated using a test developed by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). Twenty-nine teacher candidates completed the fifth-grade Language Arts exam. Opinions of the test were shared on a written survey followed by a focus group discussion. While many of the candidates felt the test was fair and grade appropriate, many shared that there was too much reading and writing. Other results include both strengths and weaknesses of the test.

Keywords: **preservice teachers, common core standards, Smarter Balanced, assessment, teacher education.**

The executive director, Joe Willhoft, of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) announced in April 2014 (Willhoft, 2014, Introduction, para. 1) that over two million students have completed the Smarter Balanced field test aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The SBAC, a state-led consortium involved with educators, researchers, and policymakers, and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC), a group of 12 states and the District of Columbia, are the two major consortia funded by the U.S. Department of Education, providing assessments to the majority of the 45 states and the District of Columbia adopting the CCSS. Forty-five states have fully adopted the CCSS and Minnesota has adopted the English Language Arts standards. School districts in adoption states are planning for full-implementation of assessments based on the CCSS beginning in Fall 2014 and the consortia are working diligently to determine needed changes and revisions to the current tests. School district administrators are working meticulously to make sure their teachers are well-informed of the new standards, and teacher educators must follow in preparations to support teacher candidates' knowledge of the new standards and assessments.

While the adoption of educational standards is not a new phenomenon in American public schooling, the construction of the CCSS changes the focus of curricula by providing a comprehensive strategy to make more students fully ready for college and careers. This is a step in the right direction given that in 2012, 52 percent of all high school graduates took the ACT, but only 25 percent of test takers reached the college readiness level in all four areas tested (English, reading, mathematics, and science) (ACT, 2012). The CCSS may not do some things that many of us in post-secondary education would like to see (e.g. targeting a fuller scope of outcomes in the sciences, humanities, or the arts). Yet they support notions associated with liberal education, to prepare students to think critically and possess broad analytic skills. Fundamentally, the CCSS present a shift away from previous standards, which tended to be designed independently at the elementary, middle, and

high school levels (Conely, 2014; Stage, Asturias, Cheuk, Daro, & Hampton, 2013). Instead the CCSS are longitudinal in scope, designed down from the goal of college and career readiness. At the same time, they establish expectations for student performance beyond one-dimensional approaches of learning skills or content to having them engage in higher order thinking. Arguably, teacher preparation programs may need to adopt a more interdisciplinary approach to training teachers in assisting them and their future students to acquire the necessary "literacy skills and understandings required for college and career readiness in multiple disciplines" (National Governors' Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers [NGA/ CCSSO], 2010, p. 3).

On a pragmatic level, it is essential that teacher educators are aware of the test format, types of questions, and overall expectations. Providing this critical information to teacher candidates by teacher educators will support the school districts and prepare candidates as they enter classrooms for pre-student teaching, student teaching, and beginning teaching experiences. This paper describes one teacher education program's attempt at increasing instructor and teacher candidate knowledge of the CCSS and related assessments through practice tests, written surveys, and focus group discussion.

Background

Almost one-half of a century ago President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 1965). ESEA claimed it would "strengthen and improve educational quality and educational opportunities in the nation's elementary and secondary schools" (p. 27). The goal of the ESEA was to guarantee that the nation's disadvantaged children would be provided equal and optimal learning opportunities. Because of this law, millions of dollars were now being provided by the federal government to the educational system and schools in America. ESEA was "amended four times between 1965 and 1980," followed by further demands of "higher academic standards" and improved teacher preparation (Thomas & Brady, 2005, p. 53).

In 1983, the first serious accusation that the United States education system was broken came with the release of *A Nation at Risk* (U.S. National Commission on Excellence in Education). This report, claiming that U.S. students were "never first or second" and sometimes "last" on international achievement tests, highly illiterate, falling in average achievement scores, and gaining in the need for remediation in basic skills, frightened education leaders and the public into a reform frenzy (p. 8). An urgent call to action was suggested by the authors of the report followed by further study and recommendations of the Commission. Soon after the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, academic requirements for graduation and teacher certification requirements increased in many states (Thomas & Brady, 2005, p. 54).

Following *A Nation at Risk*, the late 1980s and early 1990s began to shape what is known as the Standards-Based Education Reform movement (SBR). "Standards" defined by Hamilton, Stecher, and Yuan (2005), are "what students should know and be able to do" (p. 2). These researchers described standards-based reform as increasing "academic expectations for students," "assessment of student achievement," and "accountability provisions" (p. 2). Soon, due to public demand for higher academic achievement (Pellegrino, 2004) and concerns for America's standing (in comparison to other countries) in the area of academic achievement (U.S. National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), more assessments specifically for determining achievement of students in elementary and secondary schools began to materialize. Pellegrino (2004) calls the 20th century "the century of mental tests, when educational assessments came into widespread practice" (p. 6). Kendall (2011) claimed that prior to the 1990s K–12 teachers were more about "using what they liked in the textbook and ignoring what they didn't" than following a prescribed standard curriculum (p. 3). This began to change in the late 1990s. The closer we came to the turn of the century, the more standardized tests became the norm and classroom teachers were held to teaching the standards because they knew their students would be tested on them.

In 2001 amendments were made to the Elementary and

Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and it was renamed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002). No Child Left Behind was signed into law on January 8, 2002. Thomas and Brady (2005) state that NCLB is similar to ESEA; however, the reauthorized act would "raise the bar of academic standards and hold state and local educational agencies accountable for student achievement" (p. 55). One goal of NCLB was for all students to be proficient in reading and math by 2013-2014 (Dee & Jacob, 2011). Although America was progressing in its education reform initiatives, a 2005 review of standards-based reform confirmed there was still "room for improvement" (Hamilton, Stecher, & Yuan, p. 3). Four years after the Hamilton report "governors and state commissioners of education from across the United States formed the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI)" (Kendall, 2011, p. 1). "The principal purpose of the Common Core State Standards Initiative is to identify for all stakeholders the knowledge and skills that students must acquire to succeed in college and career" (Kendall, 2011, p. 27).

With these new standards, which are said to have "higher expectations" (Maunsell, 2014, p. 65) than previous state standards, come new assessments to determine if those standards are being met. As soon as the CCSSI began implementation in various locales around the country, PARCC and SBAC began developing assessments supporting the standards. Doorey (2014) states the Common Core assessments are "intended to ensure that U.S. high school graduates will have the fundamental skills they need to begin credit-bearing coursework in postsecondary institutions or career-training programs" (p. 60).

Herman and Linn (2014) add that we must prepare "students in the United States to be internationally competitive and prepared for college and career" (p. 36). They further claim that all four Depth-of-Knowledge levels (Webb, Alt, Ely, & Vesperman, 2005) are met in both the PARCC and SBAC assessments, unlike standardized assessments of the past that focused mainly on levels one and two. "Both the PARCC and Smarter Balanced assessments feature technology-enhanced items as well as extended-performance tasks that open up new possibilities for assessment" (Herman & Linn,

2014, p. 36). They claim "the new assessments of those standards fully integrate content with higher-order thinking" (p. 36).

Statement of Purpose

Liebtag (2013) states, "In many ways implementation of the CCSS will raise the bar for what is expected of current and future teachers" (p. 62). There are numerous critics of standardized assessment who are currently asking questions specific to the CCSS assessments and related to equity in regards to necessary technology (Gullen, 2014; Saine, 2013); fairness and sensibleness of questions, bias of content, ability to determine reading ability, valuable information outcomes for teachers (Ohanian, 2014); and overall success (Sarles, 2013). There are debates swirling around the CCSSI and the future of Common Core is uncertain. Piehler (2014) recently announced that South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley signed a bill that would "require the state to drop the Common Core State Standards." Placing politics aside as well as controversies surrounding change in standards and school assessments, teacher educators must prepare teacher candidates for these changes. Teacher candidates must be aware of curriculum modifications as well as controversies and discussion surrounding these changes so they will be prepared as new classroom teachers.

Maunsell (2014) discusses the importance of communication during times of change such as these. "…Communication must be easily understood by stakeholders and tailored to the intended audience" (p. 64). Teacher candidates must be given background information on the standards movement followed by explicit information on new standards and assessments. "Effective communication isn't always easy but it is critical to success" (p. 65). We wish for our teacher candidates to be successful as preservice teachers and as practitioners.

Our goals for this study were to 1) share available Smarter Balanced Assessment information with our education majors to help them in their understanding of the new standardized assessments related to the CCSS; and 2) to determine both quantitatively and qualitatively teacher candidates' views of these sample/practice

assessments. Our intentions were to use this as a pilot study for future research related to Common Core associated assessments.

Method

Sample and Participant Selection

To elicit volunteer participation in the study, the researchers emailed the details of participant requirements to all teacher candidates enrolled in the Elementary and Special Education Programs' methods courses as well as all teacher candidates enrolled in a children's literature course. This resulted in the use of a convenient sample consisting of nineteen elementary education majors and ten special education majors. All twenty-nine participants were second semester juniors or first semester seniors in their respective degree programs. This level of student has completed a minimum of 60 hours of degree coursework, maintained an overall GPA of 2.75, and has been accepted in to the School of Education's Professional Program.

Each of the teacher candidate participants were informed that they would be taking a 60-minute assessment similar to those taken by elementary students and based on the CCSS. They were also informed that there would be follow-up questions and discussions based on the assessment.

Instrumentation

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods that included a multiple-choice and short answer fifth grade English Language Arts assessment (obtained from the Smarter Balanced website and modified [due to participants taking the test in a written format] by deleting video and audio enhanced questions); a written survey developed by the research team; and a focus group interview, with questions also developed by the research team. Specifically, data were gathered to examine the teacher candidates' views of the sample assessment based upon their experiences of completing the test.

Test

The assessment is a fifth-grade Language Arts exam developed by the SBAC. This instrument is made available to the public and can be exported from their website. The SBAC provides the assessments at no cost in order to give educators an opportunity to complete sample test items that are based on the CCSS. This fifth grade Smarter Balanced assessment consisted of twenty-one questions. Eight questions (38%) were essay and/or short response questions worth a maximum of 2 points each. The remaining thirteen questions (62%) were multiple-choice and worth a maximum of 1 point each. A perfect score on the assessment would yield an overall score of 29 points.

Because our state is a member of the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SMARTER), we selected this assessment over the test offered by PARCC, of which our state is not a member. Both the PARCC and SMARTER systems require students to demonstrate their skills in reading, writing, and mathematical reasoning on higher-order tasks, including research and essay-writing, in order to measure students' readiness for college and careers. Both are also computer-based. The SMARTER assessment, however, is also computer-adaptive—a method of test administration that adjusts in real time an assessment's level of difficulty based on individual students' responses. PARCC assessments adhere to a single form for all students (Tamayo & Aspen, 2010).

Survey

The survey contained six open-ended questions. Its purpose was to individually determine the test-takers' impression of the assessment. The survey thereby served as a strategy to describe the frequency of perceptions shared, explore relationships between different responses, and delineate the reasons for particular opinions (Schumacher & McMillan, 2001). Because the survey was self-administered, it eliminated the possibility of interviewer bias.

Focus Group Interview

Interviews are in-person conversations from which the

researchers "elicit information or expressions of opinions from another person (Putt & Springer, 1989, p. 142). The purpose of the focus group interview, conducted at the conclusion of the sample test and survey, was to provide a vehicle for exploring further the respondents' explanations. The interview protocol consisted of three questions. Unlike the survey, this method of data collection yields more open-ended responses and sometimes rich discourse. Since the interview was conducted in a group setting, the participants could also respond to others' input. This allowed the researchers to create a dialog in which the participants could pursue meaning about a perspective in greater and richer detail. All responses were audio-taped and recorded using the note-taking procedures described by Dillman (1978) and Spradley (1979).

Procedure

Prior to the test session, the researchers individually completed the same assessment provided to the teacher candidates. The online assessment was photocopied for the participant testing session after omitting the answers and computer-essential questions.

The participants completed the three components of this study together in one session. They 1) completed a sample Smarter Balanced assessment (5th grade ELA); 2) answered questions on a survey related to their experience; and 3) participated in a focus group discussion following the assessment and survey completion.

The teacher candidates arrived at a pre-planned, theater-style classroom at the researcher's university and documented their participation and attendance on a numbered log. Each participant was given a test with a number that corresponded with the number on the participation log sheet. As a group, the teacher candidates were given instructions that they would have 60 minutes to complete the assessment. They were also informed the assessment was a portion of other assessments being shared online and field-tested across the U.S. After the participants completed the survey, the researchers then conducted the group interview. The session took place for two hours.

Data Analysis

Each researcher was randomly assigned a series of tests to grade. Using the scoring rubrics and guidelines established and provided by the SBAC, the appropriate scores were determined and recorded in an Excel spreadsheet. The results were recorded using the number-identifier recorded on each test. Subsequently the grader could not identify the test-taker. The researchers also graded a second series of randomly assigned tests to establish inter-rater reliability and confidence that the score earned was valid.

The tests scores were tabulated for each item and for each teacher candidate. This procedure allows one to conduct an item-by-item analysis to determine patterns of performance across the participants' scores as well as a summative analysis of the participants' total scores.

The survey and group interview responses were sorted into a spreadsheet by question. The researchers read the responses to identify patterns. These emerging patterns were coded. The items for the identified themes were then organized and analyzed again in terms of frequency and difference.

Results

Outcome of Smarter Balanced Assessment

The fifth grade Smarter Balanced assessment consisted of twenty-one questions. Eight questions on the assessment (38%) were essay and/or short response questions worth a maximum of two points each. The remaining thirteen questions (62%) were multiple choice worth a maximum of 1 point each. A perfect score on the assessment would yield an overall score of 29 points.

Twenty-nine preservice candidates completed the assessment in a scheduled 60-minute time period. The overall test score average for all preservice candidates after converting all scores to a 100-point scale was 78.2%. Five candidates (17%) scored in the 90-100% range, nine (31%) scored in the 80-89% range, ten (34%) scored in the 70-79% range and five (17%) scored below 70%. The mean of the eight short response questions was a 1.67 on a 2-point scale, equating to an 84 on a 100-point scale. The mean

of the thirteen multiple choice questions was a .79 on a 1-point scale, equating to a 79 on a 100-point scale. Ironically, the candidates responded as readers will note in both the written survey and the focus group results for this study, that candidates viewed the assessment as having more required writing than standardized assessments they completed during their K–12 experience.

In regards to the candidates' sample assessment results, it should be noted that five candidates of the twenty-nine did not respond to all questions, thus, lowering their overall scores and potentially skewing the data. While the overall results of their assessment scores were varied, it was important for the candidates to have first-hand experience with simulated test conditions in order to provide greater insight regarding this potential K–12 assessment instrument.

Outcome of Survey

Following the completion of the Smarter Balanced assessment, candidates completed a six-question open-ended survey. Using a dichotomous data analysis approach, themes for responses to each question were determined. Responses to question one, *Describe your overall impression of the assessment*, revealed that candidates believed the assessment to be fair and appropriate for fifth grade students (34%); that the assessment consisted of too much writing making it too long (14%); that the assessment consisted of different genres and required skills (10%); and that the directions need to be revised—that some directions were too ambiguous (10%).

Candidate responses to question two, *Describe any perceived strengths of the assessment*, revealed that 28% believed the assessment strengths consist of varying question types allowing for multiple types of responses as well as assessing both writing and reading comprehension; that the assessment was concise—just the right length (17%); and that the prompts and reading passages were interesting and relatable (17%). On question three, *Describe any perceived weaknesses of the assessment*, the candidates responded that too much reading (24%) and too much writing (24%) were assessment weaknesses along with tricky wording and ambiguous

test questions (21%). The following question, *Was there any particular question or question type you found more difficult?*, revealed that candidates found questions with more than one answer or "select the best answer"-type questions difficult (31%). In contrast, candidates responded to the question, *Was there any particular question or question type you found too easy*, that defining a word used in a passage or correcting a sentence was too easy (21%) or stated that "none" of the questions were too easy (17%). Lastly, 62% of the candidates responded that they believe fifth grade students will perform *average* and 34% believe students will perform *excellent to above average* on this assessment. This final data reaffirms the candidates' initial reflection on the assessment - that it appears to be fair and appropriate for fifth grade students.

Outcome of Focus Group

Three questions were posed orally to the full group of twenty-nine preservice candidates following the administration of the Smarter Balanced assessment and the written survey. These questions were: 1) What skills and strategies would you need to take this test?; 2) Was this assessment fair and free of bias?; and 3) Having taken this test, will it change your teaching? The analysis of the transcription of the focus group conversation revealed that the candidates thought fifth grade students need to know how to read on grade level, have excellent writing and reading comprehension skills, have time management skills, and know how to use a computer. The candidates expressed concern for students having to take this assessment on the computer and how accommodations would be made for students with individualized education plans (IEPs). Additionally, the concern for being able to navigate back to look over responses or skipping ahead to areas the students felt they were more comfortable with was expressed.

The second question posed to the group targeted their perceived fairness and objectivity of the assessment. It was clear from the students' responses that this topic is a potential area of weakness. For example, the candidates wondered if a question on the assessment dealing with the topic of hermit crabs was "biased"—would

all fifth graders know about hermit crabs? The candidates further expressed that perhaps the assessment being administered on the computer was not fair since not all students have the same amount of experience using a computer.

Lastly, candidates responded that if South Carolina does indeed elect to use this assessment to measure competency of the CCSS in K–12 classrooms, they will have to ensure that their students are comfortable writing open-ended responses and that reading passages are used frequently as an assessment tool.

Implications

Preservice candidates, overall, view the fifth grade Smarter Balanced assessment to be fair and grade appropriate (34%). However, the candidates stated that the assessment contained too much writing and too much reading for one assessment time period, but responded positively that the assessment contained varied question formats including short answer, complete the chart, circle the correct word, etc. When asked how South Carolina fifth graders will perform on this assessment should the state elect to adopt this instrument, 96% of the candidates stated that the students would perform average or above, reinforcing their view that this assessment is fair and grade appropriate.

With an overall N of twenty-nine participants, the researchers are careful not to generalize the results. However, the data do reveal that teacher candidates are concerned about the proposed standardized assessment and its overall construction (too much reading and writing). The participants did acknowledge the presentation of diverse question formats and varying levels of questioning, however, indicating that this would "be great for different learners." The participants went as far as indicating that they believe elementary students in South Carolina public schools will perform average or above, thus, revealing their confidence in perhaps their own teaching or the teaching of the current practicing teachers working with S.C. students.

Discussion

Teacher preparation programs need to assure that their training best prepares teacher candidates to enter our K–12 classrooms where CCSS and high-stakes testing are in place. According to the results of this small pilot study, it is clear that reading and writing in the content areas needs to be emphasized in methods courses and that technology needs to be seamlessly integrated into both instruction as well as formal assessment practices to assist in candidate preparation.

As Conley (2014) has already suggested, "many teachers may find it challenging to expect students to use evidence to support their assertions, to read informational texts, to think more deeply and systematically, to demonstrate a better command of language" (p. 12). Teacher training programs can overcome this hurdle by integrating the practices of teaching reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language in and across all disciplines or content areas. Moreover, the teacher preparation programs often separate methodology classes by content area and, therefore, employ different terminology and questioning techniques for each subject. The CCSS terminology aligns with Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy, which represents different levels of cognition and consists of the following stages of thinking: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Giouroukakis & Cohan, 2014). This common language promotes an interdisciplinary approach of teaching. Minimally, the CCSS standards' use of Bloom's levels of cognition provides a common set of expectations for all subject areas that assist teachers in planning for successful instruction.

While South Carolina, where this study took place, is still in debate over which assessment to move forward with in 2014-2015, it is clear that teacher preparation institutions need to be poised to adjust their strategies to meet the needs of teacher candidates. As states move to full implementation of the CCSS and adopt national standardized assessments, additional research is essential to measure their impact at the K–12 and teacher preparation levels.

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It's a 'Win/Win': The Best Thing We Ever Did Was to Invite Parents to Learn with Their Children

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Abstract

This paper describes a community-based after-school tutoring project, where families are participants together with their children. There are 50 family members involved in the project, several have multiple children enrolled, and four families were selected for an in-depth case study. The goals of this mixed method study were to determine why parents persist at endeavors such as these with their children who struggle in school, and how schools of education can effectively incorporate families as an essential constituent in teacher education. Findings indicated that all families engaged in the project reported the positive impact of the project on their children's academic learning and growth in confidence. In addition, families reported ways they learned to engage in their children's learning processes. This meaningful engagement was reported as one of the key reasons that motivated families to stay involved.

Introduction

Families possess more power for positive interventions in their children's education than schools often credit them for and than what most parents even realize (Goodlad & Lovitt, 1993). This lack of realization is unfortunate because it limits the potential for parents to play a major role in shaping how they and schools can work together for the benefit of their children. However, because of the many different kinds of parents in our schools today and the increasing numbers of parents and children from diverse cultural, ethnic, racial, socioeconomic and linguistic backgrounds, effective parent-school collaborations can potentially be more challenging. Therefore, it seems logical that today's teachers preparing to enter the profession for the first time learn how to involve this wide array of parents for the benefit of all the students in their classrooms. Preparing preservice teachers to be able to effectively involve parents in their children's learning and for parents/guardians to work with the preservice teachers was, for us, not only essential, but entirely providential in this tutoring project. In short, it was a "win-win."

In this study, we explore family participation in a collaborative tutoring program that is conducted through students' reading of several narrative texts, their participation in music, as well as through their involvement in science experiments and science tutoring classes. Through collaboration preservice teachers, university faculty, community partners and volunteers served as tutors, while identified struggling readers from local schools were tutees. One of the major features of this tutoring program is that family participation is mandatory.

Theoretical Framework

More than three decades ago Bronfenbrenner (1986) made the argument that key to the promotion of a child's development is the family. This view of the importance of family in children's education has been supported over and over again in various settings and environments. In settings that highlight children's reading efforts, researchers found improved comprehension among children when

parents were involved with their children in shared-book reading (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002; Sénéchal, LeFevre, Hudson, & Lawson, 1996; Sénéchal, LeFevre, Smith-Chant, & Colton, 2001). Parents can partner with schools to continue or supplement the instruction their children receive. Central to this idea of parents helping to supplement instruction is the requirement that schools treat parents as equal partners in the education of their children. In shaping her comprehensive framework related to school, family, and community, Epstein (1995) points out that the task of preparing children for educational success really begins when schools view parents as partners.

We agree with many researchers since Bronfenbrenner (1986), who continue to argue that parental involvement is beneficial to children's academic achievement (Epstein, 2005; Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2005). We argue that such involvement not only allows parents to see up-close their own children's academic abilities, but that it also helps parents who are trying to determine how best to help their children at home if they know what and how their children are learning (Epstein, 2005). Parental involvement is further enhanced by the issue of "value." As Rattigan-Rohr (2012) notes, "The bottom line is children's views of school and how they participate in it are impacted to a significant degree by what they come to believe in their homes" (p. 8). If parents are involved in their children's academic pursuits, then there is a relatively loud statement to children that parents care about and value what their children are doing academically, thus, creating an environment in which the children themselves begin to view their own academic efforts as valuable (Epstein, 1988; Hill & Taylor, 2004).

Convincing evidence supports the view that the importance of parental involvement in school-related endeavors does not stop with a child's academics. Such evidence further indicates that parental involvement also affects variables which serve to enhance overall academic achievement. Variables such as appropriate behaviors, regular classroom attendance and positive attitudes are all strongly correlated to parental involvement (Billman, Geddes, & Hedges, 2005; Epstein, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hill &

Craft, 2003; Jeynes, 2005; Overstreet, Devine, Bevins & Efreom, 2005). Considering the ample evidence supporting the significance of parental involvement, it is important that educators learn to include the many different parents found in today's schools in their children's academic achievement and is vital because of the deficit view, held by many, of minority parents (Villenas, 2001). This view is manifested in the assumption by some that many minority parents are unwilling to support their children's education (Valencia & Black, 2002). We would argue that this assumption is confounded further when the minority parents are poor. Furthermore, candidates in teacher education courses are often not representative of the wider population (de Courcy, 2007).

As such, cultural diversity courses in teacher education programs often prove to be beneficial. Nonetheless, as important as diversity courses are to teacher education, such courses alone are not enough. A study by DeCastro-Ambrosetti and Cho (2005) revealed that a majority of preservice and inservice teachers, who took courses that had cultural diversity concepts embedded within the curricula, experienced an increased self-awareness; an awareness, understanding, and appreciation of other cultures; as well as an accepting and understanding attitude toward culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) PK–12 students. Despite the positive change toward PK–12 students however, the majority of the preservice participants still exhibited negative perceptions toward the value ethnic minority parents place on education. The participants continued to believe that the home and the lack of value that minority parents placed on education were responsible for their students' deficient academic achievement. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1978) explained the perceptions about Black and poor parents as myths that minority parents "do not care about the education of their children, are passive and unresponsive to attempts to get them involved, and are ignorant naïve about the intellectual and social needs of their children" (p. 36).

Undoubtedly, there is a need to find an approach to improve reading abilities among poor Black and Latino students nationally. If educational disparities in the United States, including the ability

to read, delineated along social class, race, and ethnicity are to have a counter-narrative, then parent involvement which has been shown to be positively related to students' academic successes should be broadly explored by teacher education (Barnard, 2004; De Civita, Pagani, Vitaro, & Tremblay, 2004),

Specifically, we should seek to provide meaningful opportunities for preservice teachers to not only have practicum opportunities to practice how to teach reading to underperforming readers of CLD populations, but we should also provide them opportunities to closely interact with and to engage CLD parents, and to work to support such parents in the academic learning of their children.

Program Context

The project for our study takes place in an area of North Carolina that has fallen on hard economic times. Many of the textile mills that supported the area in better times have now relocated to other countries. There has also been a significant increase in the area's Hispanic population. Many of the newly arriving Hispanic parents only speak Spanish, and often they are unemployed.

Economic difficulties in the region and its resulting poverty rates are detrimental to student achievement on many levels. We know from research that more than 40% of the variance in average reading scores and 46% of the variance in average math scores is associated with variation in child poverty rates (NAEP, 2012). In North Carolina, 26% of children live in poverty (Kids Count Report, 2012). However, in the area in which our project operates approximately 29% of children live in poverty (North Carolina Justice Center, 2012). The recent Kids Count (2012) data also noted that 41% of children born into single-parent households live in poverty. In our county, 39% of children live in single parent households. It is against this backdrop that our project is situated.

The "It Takes a Village" Project (or Village Project) is a multisite university-community collaborative tutoring project designed specifically to engage struggling readers and their families. Similar to other community-based tutoring programs, the Village Project aims at enhancing struggling readers' reading achievement and

motivation through one-to-one tutoring. One of the unique features of the Village Project is its family involvement requirement. In addition, as a university-community collaborative project, other volunteers, including inservice teachers, also assist in the work with struggling readers and their families. However, the majority of the tutors participating in the Village Project are preservice teacher candidates.

The preservice teacher reading course, from which this particular study is derived, was first designed as a traditional reading methods course which examined the five components of reading and explored various cases of students' reading struggles with decoding and comprehension. However, the professor of the reading course was unconvinced that preservice teachers ended the course with an appreciable understanding of the complexities associated with reading difficulties. That is, did preservice teachers fully grasp the concept that there could be several reasons for children's reading difficulties? If so, were they able to address those difficulties in a real struggling reader as opposed to a case study on paper? Did preservice teachers think about the effects of those reading difficulties upon the struggling students and their parents? And did they consider their own roles in working with parents to address students' reading issues? With these questions as a catalyst, the reading course was redesigned to include two phases. Phase I continued to cover reading theory with emphasis on the five core reading components - phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension – and how to successfully teach each component. Additionally, as Fang (2008) suggests, preservice teachers also looked beyond these five components and examined the complexities associated with reading expository texts. Phase I also involved a great deal of Duffy's (2003) work regarding the explicit teaching of comprehension strategies. Preservice teachers also read about and discussed the value of parental inclusion in education and the importance of parent voice in the educational efforts of their children (Epstein, 2001).

Phase II addressed praxis. In Phase II, which was held at the local library, preservice teachers drew upon the knowledge they

gained in Phase I to tutor (one-on-one) a struggling reader and involve the reader's parent(s) in the process. Preservice teachers were not only given the opportunity to work with struggling students and their parents, but they were also expected to challenge and stretch themselves as they prepared various lessons for their tutees. Additionally, the course provided preservice teachers with the opportunity to closely examine the many issues faced by some students for whom reading is difficult and, if needed, to adjust the lens through which many struggling students and their parents are viewed. Phase II of the project was a reciprocal relationship and the preservice teachers had many opportunities to learn from parents regarding their children's reading interests, the types of techniques that seem to work at home, and other advice or information the parents desire to share.

Initially, families were recruited into the program by classroom teachers and principals from partner Title I schools. A flyer was sent home with students who received a failing score of "level 1" on their end-of-grade standardized test in reading. Over time however, parents started to tell other parents about the project, and as a result, a large number of parents began bringing their children to the sessions and there was no longer a need to send home letters with children through the schools. The tutoring sessions were held at the local library in the students' neighborhood. The library was chosen after an initial on-campus location proved to be difficult for some parents to access. The first time we offered the tutoring in 2008 we essentially asked parents to come to us. That year, the project started with 25 students and their parents, but by the end of the semester only 16 students and their parents remained in the project. Parent evaluations at the end of the course led us to conclude that a change of venue closer to our students' community was more desirable for our parents, rather than having them make the trip to campus. Thus, the community library was selected for two important reasons: 1) Many of our students and their families could walk to the library, eliminating the transportation issues which plagued the on-campus sessions; 2) Parents and students could readily access the materials and services in the library without any

cost to them.

In spring 2013, the tutoring project took place on Mondays and Wednesdays. Each student was assigned his/her personal tutor. Tutoring sessions were held for two hours per session and parents/guardians attended every session for a seven-week period. Reading and music tutoring sessions were offered on Wednesdays, while science tutoring sessions were offered on Mondays. As a result, parents and their children participated with us for a total of six hours per week over seven weeks. Though we began the tutoring sessions in 2008 with a focus only on reading (we call this reading in the Village), over time we added science (science in the Village) and music (music in the Village). Science was added because parents noted many of their children were having difficulty comprehending their science textbooks. Music was added because many of the elements required for effective reading comprehension are utilized in choral singing (Gromko, 2005). These include prosody, rhythm, syllabification, and comprehension. Thus, by 2013 during the period of this study, students were reading various texts – narratives, science books and song books. This particular study focused only on the reading component of the Village Project.

Methods

In this study we focused on the family involvement component of the Village Project. The following questions guided the design of this study: 1) What do families perceive as the impact of the Village Project? 2) What motivates families to continue to participate in the Village Project?

Participants

A total of 50 family members (including parents, grandparents, and other guardians) and 68 children participated in the Village Project in spring 2013. We should note that our view of family involvement is not limited to the traditional construction of parents as mother and father of a child. For us, "families" attending the project with their children could include any family member or guardian who attended the project with the tutee and who continued

the work at home with the tutee. Though most of the family members attending were the mothers of the children, there were also 10 fathers, four grandmothers, two aunts, and one college-aged sibling. Fifty-four percent of the families were Hispanic, 40% were African American, and 6% were White. Fourteen of the 50 family members have been participating since the project's inception in the spring of 2008. Eight parents participated for the first time in spring 2013, while attendance of the others ranged from three to four years. Forty out of 50 families completed a project survey at the end of the spring 2013 semester (80% response rate).

To better understand families' experiences and their perceptions of the project, in addition to the survey we focused on four participating parents in this study. These four parents were selected based on their language proficiency, educational background, employment status, and the length of time they had been engaged with the Village Project. We believed these criteria for our case study selection provided us with a broad cross-section of opinions.

The four selected parents were Tasha (English speaking, high-educational level), Joseph (Spanish-speaking, high-educational level), Jasmine (English speaking, low-educational level), and Lilly (Spanish-speaking, low-educational level). These parents have been involved with the Village Project for one to five years. Three of our selected participants were involved as parents, while Jasmine is a grandmother.

Tasha came to the Village a year ago. She was a stay-at-home mom with a relatively high-educational background. Joseph and his wife have also been involved with the Village for one year. The family is originally from Columbia but Joseph obtained a position to teach Spanish in a local high school, relocating them to North Carolina. Knowing that some parents wanted to learn other languages, Joseph offered to teach Spanish to other parents in the Village.

Jasmine has been with us for five years. She has three grandchildren attending the project. She became the de facto "matriarch" of our Village. She is known as "Miss Jasmine" to all of us. We were all enthralled with her energy and her fierce determination that her

"grandchildren will get every opportunity [she] did not have." In recent newspaper coverage about the project, Miss Jasmine was quoted as saying that the project has taught her grandchildren that though you are poor and might be "in the valley you can make it to the mountain."

Lilly has been with the Village for four years. She recently became an informal "leader" in a lively group of English-speaking parents (mostly African American) and Spanish-speaking parents (mostly Mexican and Colombian) who have started to help each group learn the other's language. For one hour each week, this group of parents comes together to work with each other. Their reading material consists of everything from supermarket circulars to restaurant menus.

Research Design

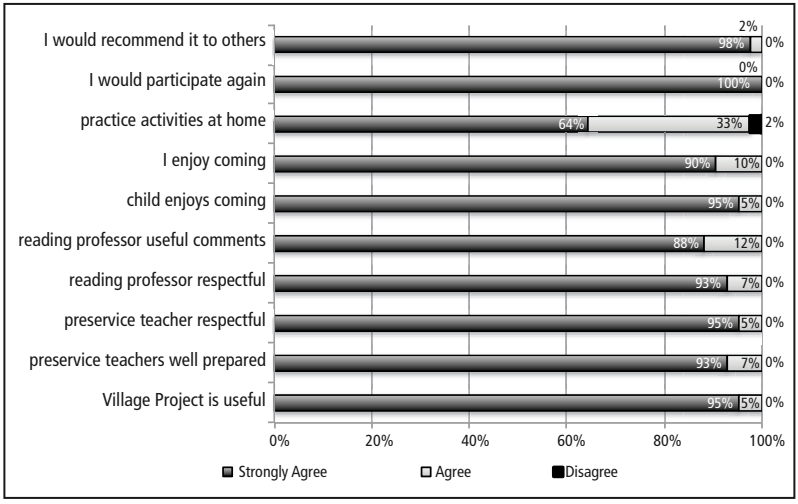
A mixed methods design was employed to capture the perceptions of all participating families and highlight four parents' cases with in-depth description (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from participating families during spring 2013 to address the research questions. The study was conducted in two phases. During the first phase, a survey containing both Likert-scale items and open-ended questions was distributed to all families at the end of the tutoring program. Surveys were written in English and Spanish, and families were encouraged to respond in their native language. Descriptive statistics were reported based on the quantitative data from the survey. Qualitative data from all parents were analyzed for themes and patterns as related to the research questions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). To better understand individual participants' experiences, we conducted additional interviews with four selected parents representing different levels of educational backgrounds (high or low) and native languages (Spanish or English) during the second phase of the study. Data from the four identified parents were analyzed first in a vertical manner to form four individual cases and then compared horizontally to identify similarities and differences across cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The overall survey results

and in-depth case descriptions offered us a more comprehensive understanding of families' experiences in the Village Project.

Findings

Family Perceptions of the Village Project

All families reported their perception of the effectiveness of the Village Project on the survey. As illustrated in Figure 1, the quantitative survey results indicated overwhelmingly positive feedback from families. Almost all respondents found the Village Project useful for their children, felt the preservice teachers and reading professors were respectful and helpful, and noted that their children enjoyed the experience. Most of them also strongly agreed that they practiced some of the activities at home (60%).



The qualitative findings from the survey suggested that the parents practiced what they learned from the Village Project, including reading strategies such as read-alouds, role plays, drawings, flash cards, and sounding out words; games such as word bingos and memory games; and other computer programs, at home with their children. Some parents even commented on specific strategies they noted that can help their children in reading. For example, one parent mentioned that they "read together and use our imagination"

to assist the reading practices at home. When asked about how the project can be improved, most of the parents reported how much they appreciated the one-on-one support tutors provided, and many of them wanted to continue to participate in the program and wished that the program could be longer.

The four case study participants reported different perspectives on the impact of the Village Project for them and their children or grandchildren. Tasha found the Village a "worthwhile experience" not only for her child, but for herself as well. Joseph found the project helpful for both his son and his wife. Tasha noted that she can "be there along with my child learning hands-on and gaining experience in education." She emphasized that she continued to practice literacy strategies at home with her daughter. The most important aspect of the Village for Tasha was "confidence." As she commented:

> "If a child has confidence that someone believes in her, being the mother and the actual tutor, then it will go a long way. Last year we had so many problems at school because my child was so frustrated and down on herself all the time. She just didn't know how to read well. When Ms. Tucker (her child's teacher) suggested I come down to see if we could get a space I jumped at it right away and came down here the very next day. They put us on the waitlist, but I called every day, sometimes I called twice a day. I know I was a pest but my pestering paid off and we are so glad because it's like night and day for her self-esteem. So yeah, I would say, to me, the confidence building is the biggest thing the project has done for us."

It left little doubt that Tasha was very satisfied to see her daughter's confidence in reading grow through the project and very glad that she was actively involved in this process. As a parent who was eager to be part of the learning process with her daughter, Tasha remarked that teachers need to do more in their efforts at helping parents know what to do and provide them with tools with which they can better support their children at home.

Similar to Tasha, Joseph also saw the growth of confidence and reading achievement in his son, in addition to his reading achievement. As Joseph put it, "He was very scared when we first came, but now look at him, all confident and smiling." Joseph emphasized that the project was "especially good" for his wife, Vivian, even though she does not speak much English. Joseph reported that Vivian understood the activities tutors demonstrated and they tried to do all the literacy activities at home as well. In addition, the Village also provided Vivian an opportunity to socialize with other Spanish-speaking moms who were learning alongside their children in the Village.

Thus, for Joseph and Vivian, the most important part of the Village was the community.

> "It's like a place to go where everyone knows everyone and everyone is working for the same thing, and the best part is that the children are happy to come. I mean my wife [is] not so sure what to do or say when she goes to his school, but everybody here help [*sic*] her so much that she feels like we have a team on our side, you know? She feels like she can come here and everybody will help her with what to say or what to do. How you say? Is like a life line."

So it seems parental involvement was also supported by factors such as the "climate" of the Village that allowed parents to feel "belonged" and contributing to the project in some important way.

Motivations of Family Involvement

Based on the survey results, parents reported working with their children and the tutors on reading, writing, signing, and playing. We asked an open-ended question on the survey to inquire about families' motivation to be involved in the Village Project. Based on the responses, we observed that most of the families noted they continued to participate in the Village because they believed that it was crucial to support their children's education. For example, one participant commented, "I keep coming to the Village because it is very important for my daughter." Another parent said,

> [I attend] because from the first time we came, we saw that the program has positive results. My eldest daughter's knowledge in English was very limited because she has not been in the United States for long. [After participating in the program], she began to improve and had better scores in school.

In addition to learning opportunities for their children, parents also viewed the tutoring program as an opportunity for them to learn from the tutors. As one father stated, "[the program] not only involves the child, but also the father in accomplishing the activities including reading." Several parents also commented that the program "offers space for families and the community to integrate." Several parents pointed to their own hard work with their children after they experienced how diligently the tutors worked to make personal connections and to involve them in the language and literacy development of their children.

Discussion

Our efforts to involve parents in our after-school tutoring project taught us several important lessons. We learned from our parents' persistence, the energy they brought to the tutoring, the work they did at home, and their willingness to partner with us, that when we open wide our practice and let parents into the work we are undertaking with their children we begin to see important growth for all involved. This growth is not so much because of the work we are doing alone, but rather the work we, teachers and families, are undertaking together. We saw firsthand the overwhelming positive responses from parents as tutors worked hard to make personal connections with parents and involved the parents in the literacy development of their children. We learned from parents like Miss Jasmine and Lilly that when parents are treated as equal partners who bring their own expertise to the community of practice, that community is richer all around.

Perhaps one important lesson that emerged from the data that we were not looking for was just how crucial it is for us, as teacher

educators, to create spaces and places in our own practice that will allow for novice teachers to be able to experience the strength and depth parents can bring to their work. It might have been easy or maybe even sufficient for us to have our students read and research about the importance of parental involvement. However, having seen the benefits (to all of us) of having parents partnering with us side-by-side, we cannot imagine our teacher education practice without them. We have come to appreciate that when our preservice teachers begin to view family-school partnerships as a natural component of their curriculum and practice, they are forced to consider all the ways they must work to ensure parents are brought into the learning environment. At issue for us now is to figure out how to re-conceptualize our teacher education program in such a way as to make parental involvement an educationally and socially sustainable component of our practice.

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Are We There Yet?
Using Rubrics to Support Progress Toward Proficiency and Model Formative Assessment

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Abstract

Classroom assessment, especially formative assessment, is one of the most challenging areas for new teachers, so it is imperative that teacher educators model effective classroom assessment practices. This article describes the use of rubrics in formative assessment, to support candidates in their progress toward mastery of course outcomes and to model effective formative assessment. A rationale for the use of rubrics in formative assessment, embedded in the literature, is followed by an example of how each author has used rubrics during the learning process to enhance learning and contribute to a supportive learning environment in their teacher education courses. Recommendations are made for requiring candidates to engage in rubric-based self- and peer evaluation and involving them in co-construction of rubrics.

Keywords: formative assessment, rubrics

This paper is a result of multiple conversations among the authors about how rubrics can be best used in undergraduate courses, both to improve our own instruction and to model effective assessment practices for our teacher candidates. Our interest in rubrics stems from our belief that all students can learn, and that our role as educators is to support students in their progress toward proficiency. These collaborative reflections have influenced our implementation of rubrics in ways that we believe have improved our instruction, enhanced our teacher candidates' learning, and given teacher candidates a greater role to play in assessment and evaluation. After summarizing the benefits of formative assessment and the advantages of using rubrics, we describe how we have used rubrics not only for grading assignments, but also as formative assessment to improve learning and to model effective implementation of formative assessment.

Literature Review

Assessment and evaluation are terms that are sometimes used interchangeably. We use McMillan's (2007) definition of classroom assessment as "the collection, evaluation, and use of information to help teachers make decisions that improve student learning" (p. 8). Evaluation is one step in the broader process of classroom assessment. Specifically, evaluation is the "interpretation of what has been gathered through measurement, in which value judgments are made about performance" (p. 10). Whether assessment is formative or summative, evaluation is the process by which assessment results are designated as excellent, good, acceptable, below expectations, or whatever indicators of quality are selected. Descriptions of these levels of quality are described on a rubric.

The role of assessment in the learning process has undergone a paradigm shift in past decades. No longer is it considered effective to "teach, test and hope for the best," using only summative assessment to determine end-of-term grades (Wiggins, 1998, p. 10). Summative assessment serves to document the learning that has occurred. Good summative assessment that allows for valid, reliable, and bias-free measurement and evaluation of learners'

progress toward desired learning targets (Angelo & Cross, 1993) will always be important. But formative assessment is now considered a central component of effective instruction.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is concerned with monitoring progress with the intent of gathering and sharing information that can be used to advance learning and improve future performances (Popham, 2011; Wiliam, 2011). Bell and Cowie (2001) define formative assessment as "the process used by teacher and students to recognize and respond to student learning in order to enhance that learning, during the learning" (p. 536). Indeed, Good (2011) suggests the use of an alternative, more accurate phrase, "formative use of assessment information" (p. 1), emphasizing that the main difference between formative assessment and summative assessment is in how the assessment results are used. Results of formative assessments are not included in end-of-term grades because grades are a result of summative assessment that takes place after learning has occurred. Formative assessment results are used to inform both the teacher and the student, who can then make corresponding adjustments to instructional strategies and study practices, respectively. Formative assessment is not a new phenomenon, but it has increased in prominence in recent years. Originally used in the context of classroom assessment by Benjamin Bloom in 1969 (as cited in Wiliam, 2011), formative assessment became especially prominent after Black and Wiliam (1998) published a landmark review of research on formative assessment, concluding that formative assessment plays an extremely important role in improving learning.

Using rubrics in formative assessment may also influence students' motivation to learn (Wiliam, 2011). Stiggins and Chappuis (2012) claim that involving students in the process of assessment builds their self-efficacy, thereby creating an "emotional foundation" (p. 16) that explains the power of formative assessment. Based on a review of research on motivation, Pintrich (2003) identified several principles for the design of learning experiences

that enhance students' motivation. Two of these design principles are especially relevant to our work with rubrics: (a) "Use task, reward and evaluation structures that promote mastery, learning, effort, progress, and self-improvement standards and less reliance on social comparison or norm-referenced standards," and (b) "Provide clear and accurate feedback regarding competence and self-efficacy, focusing on the development of competence, expertise and skill" (Pintrich, 2003, p. 672). The first principle relates to rubrics because a rubric enables criterion-referenced evaluation by explicitly describing the criteria against which a student's work will be compared. Self-improvement is not dependent in any way on the performance of peers, but depends on the individual student's demonstration of proficiency. The second principle is similar; having established the criteria by which competence will be judged, feedback will necessarily focus on the degree to which competence has been attained. In a similar vein, McMillan (2007) claims that motivation is increased by assessments that are "(a) meaningful and authentic, (b) use immediate and specific feedback, and (c) use learning goals that incorporate specific performance standards" (p. 81). Moreover, how students perceive the classroom environment is likely to influence their motivation. "If students perceive the environment as supportive, motivation is likely to be enhanced…" (Ambrose, Bridges, Lovett, DiPietro, & Norman, 2010, p. 79). Using rubrics is one of the ways that Ambrose et al. suggest establishing a supportive classroom environment.

Advantages of Rubrics

Using rubrics has advantages for both the instructor and the students. The process of constructing a rubric for a particular project helps instructors to clarify the learning targets they wish to measure, which can in turn support the identification of authentic performance tasks (Andrade, 2005). Construction of a rubric requires clarity about the particular standards or criteria that should be measured and about the characteristics that would distinguish varying levels of quality.

When students' performances are evaluated with a rubric, the

rubric helps to ensure fairness in grading, bringing a level of objectivity to what might otherwise be viewed as subjective grading (Diab & Balaa, 2011; Reddy & Andrade, 2010). Using a rubric to evaluate student products facilitates giving targeted feedback to students (Andrade & Du, 2007; Schamber & Mahoney, 2006; Stevens & Levi, 2005; Schamber & Mahoney, 2006; Andrade & Du, 2007), because the characteristics that are deemed markers of each level of quality on each relevant criterion have been pre-determined in the process of rubric construction.

A few studies have explored students' perceptions of rubrics. Just as the process of developing a rubric helps the instructor to clarify his/her own expectations for a particular assignment, the rubric itself, when shared with students, helps students understand the instructor's expectations. Students felt the quality of their work was better when rubrics were used, but only if the rubric was available to students as they worked on the assignment (Reynolds-Keefer, 2010). Students also perceived that instructors who used rubrics were more likely to get graded assignments handed back more quickly (Reynolds-Keefer, 2010), and to give more helpful feedback (Reynolds-Keefer, 2010; Walser, 2011). They also believed that grading was more likely to be fair in classes where the instructor used a rubric to grade student products (Andrade & Du, 2007).

Some students in Reynolds-Keefer's (2010) study reported that having a rubric provided a reference point for communicating with the instructor. Instead of feeling that they did not even understand the assignment enough to ask questions, they had a concrete document from about which to ask questions. This suggests that rubrics may help to improve communication between instructor and students, fostering a supportive classroom climate.

Given these advantages, it is surprising that rubrics are not used in all courses. Diab and Balaa (2011) surveyed the students in their courses and found that 97% reported that their rubrics were useful, but 80% had never before taken a class in which rubrics were used. When rubrics are used, they seem to be most often used in summative assessment to determine final grades on student products

(Tunon & Brydges, 2006). However, using a rubric in summative assessment does not preclude its use in formative assessment. When rubrics are discussed with students and are available to students while they are working on the assignment, the rubric can become an integral component of the instructional process (Andrade, 2005).

Although studies exploring how rubrics influence learning are few, there is some evidence that students invest more metacognitive effort, such as evaluating their own work (Bolton, 2006; Jonsson & Svingby, 2007), and earn higher grades (Andrade & Du, 2007; Howell, 2011; Andrade & Du, 2007; Vandenberg, Stollak, McKeag, & Obermann, 2010) when rubrics are provided. In reviewing research on the use of rubrics in formative assessment, Panadero and Jonsson (2013) found some evidence that the use of rubrics has a positive impact on student learning, especially when the rubric is used in a formative way in combination with metacognitive activities such as using the rubric as a frame of reference for required exercises in self- or peer evaluation. However, Reynolds-Keefer (2010) found that not all students reported taking the initiative to use the rubric to reflectively evaluate their own work before handing it in. The opportunity for self-evaluation afforded by the rubric was under-utilized by the students.

Rubric-Based Self-Evaluation and Peer Evaluation

Panadero (2011) defined self-assessment as "… qualitative assessment of the learning process, and of its final product, realized on the basis of pre-established criteria" (p. 78). This is not a process of rating or scoring one's own work; it is a metacognitive judgment of the degree to which one's work approaches some known criteria. Providing a rubric and discussing it together with students serves to make the pre-established criteria accessible to students for use in self-evaluation. In this way, the instructor provides an opportunity for students to begin to internalize the criteria, which may have a positive impact on students' motivation (Panadero & Alonso-Tapia, 2013).

Andrade and Valtcheva (2009) describe three critical steps in the

self-evaluation process. First, the instructor shares his/her expectations with students, usually through presentation and discussion of a rubric. Second, students look at their work, comparing it to those expectations. Third, students use what they learned in their self-evaluation to revise their work. The opportunity to revise and improve is critical, because students "…will not self-assess thoughtfully unless they know that their efforts can lead to opportunities to actually make improvements…" (Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009, p. 14). The same process is used in peer evaluation, with students looking at one another's work.

Using a rubric for self-evaluation should result in improved student performance, and the same should be true for peer evaluation. Diab and Balaa (2011) required their students to peer evaluate one another's work using a rubric the instructor provided. The students reported finding this helpful. The instructors observed that the rubric may have helped students to become more engaged in learning, as their undergraduate students demonstrated improved writing performance when they were required to engage in rubric-based peer evaluation. Cartney (2010) organized students into small groups to review one another's essays and provide feedback to one another. Students were unanimous in reporting that this exercise helped them to improve their essay. Some commented that it was not only the feedback that was received, but also the process of giving feedback on peers' work that contributed to their understanding of how to improve their own essay. Orsmond, Merry, and Callaghan (2004) provided training that introduced students to their rubric criteria for posters in a biology class, and then led them in working together to use the rubric to evaluate an exemplar before they engaged students in peer evaluation of one another's posters. On a feedback questionnaire administered afterward, students reported that the peer-evaluation process had promoted both dialogue and reflection and had moved them away from a mindset of "redoing" to one of "rethinking" (p. 288). That is, rather than making surface level improvements to improve their grade, students used the peer-evaluation process to think deeply about the quality of their work and how it could be improved, demonstrating what

Dweck (2007) refers to as a "growth mind-set" (p. 34).

In some instances, feedback from peers may be as beneficial as feedback from the instructor. Ozogul and Sullivan (2009) found that when teacher candidates had been trained to use a rubric to evaluate their peers' lesson plans, the feedback provided by peer evaluations was very similar to the feedback provided by instructors. Teacher candidates were able to improve their lesson plans to the same degree, regardless of whether they received feedback from their peers or their instructors. Topping (2009) makes the important point that because of time constraints, more feedback—and more timely feedback—is likely to be available from peers than from instructors. Hattie and Timperley, in their 2011 review of literature on quality feedback, provide a strong argument that peers can provide effective feedback.

Using Rubrics in Formative Assessment – Our Experiences

For each of the authors, the use of rubrics has been something of a journey. Realizing that we should be modeling good assessment practice, particularly when working with students who were preservice teachers (henceforth, candidates), we began using rubrics, but primarily in a summative manner. Although we did hand out the rubric in class as we explained the upcoming assignment, we assumed that candidates would, on their own initiative, use the rubric to self-evaluate their product before submitting it for grading. Our experience was consistent with the findings of Reynolds-Keefer (2010) – that a few candidates did this, but many did not. It was only as we graded candidates' products that we discovered aspects of the rubric that they had misunderstood or interpreted differently than intended. In those cases, we either modified the rubric so we had an improved tool for the next group of candidates or made sure to discuss those aspects with candidates the next time. This meant that use of the rubric informed our continuing instruction with the next group of students, but it was not formative for current students. We came to realize that we wanted the rubric to not only help us in grading, but to help our students in learning. We

were eager for candidates to involve themselves in the evaluation process, but we had not explicitly invited their involvement.

Therefore, we set out to be more intentional about using our rubrics formatively, to support candidates in moving toward their ultimate target of demonstrating proficiency in the area being assessed. We have found it helpful to use an analogy developed by the third author when we introduce the concept of rubrics to candidates. This analogy, included as Table 1, uses the familiar idea of a road trip—a life experience to which our students can relate—to help students better understand the function of a rubric. By monitoring where their work is on "the map," candidates are made aware of what is still needed to make progress toward the goal. As explained by Vandenberg et al. (2010), the rubric serves as a sort of global positioning system (GPS) guiding the candidate toward proficiency. This analogy helps to create a shared vision that allows for the possibility of bringing candidates into the process of co-developing a rubric. It also helps communicate to candidates the value of comparing their own work to the criteria on the rubric, just as one might compare the street signs one is driving past with the names of the streets on the road map.

Table 1
Analogy for a Rubric: Imagine that Your Task is to Get From Grand Rapids to Detroit. Here's How a Rubric Might be Used to Evaluate Your Trip.

Grade	Outcome	Description
F	Grand Rapids	Because of a lack of understanding or effort, you spun your wheels and never really left Grand Rapids.
D	Chicago	It's obvious you put a lot of effort into this trip, but you went in the wrong direction. You did not meet most of the intended goals.
C	Lansing	You're headed in the right direction, but there is still a lot to do before you reach your destination.
B	Windsor	Whoa! You overshot the goal. An occasional side trip is to be expected (encouraged, even), but be aware.
A	Detroit	You made it! You provide an efficient and insightful route from Grand Rapids to Detroit.

Once candidates have been introduced to the idea of a rubric, they are better prepared to use a rubric to self-evaluate their own work. Rather than handing in an assignment and waiting for the instructor to inform them of their score, candidates who engage in self-evaluation changed their focus from "what's my score" to "what did I do well and how could I do better," thereby shifting the focus of evaluation from an implied norm-referenced focus to an explicit criterion-referenced focus, and simultaneously providing an opportunity to discuss these important assessment concepts. The goal in evaluating candidates' work, both for the candidates as they self-evaluate, and for the instructor as he/she evaluates candidates' products, becomes providing clear feedback about the performance while identifying potential areas for growth.

To this end, the second author began employing the rubrics shown as Tables 2 and 3 for candidate self-evaluation in a mathematics education course. His aims were twofold. First, he wanted to provide more timely feedback so candidates would be able to improve their performance within the 15-week time frame of the semester. Second, he desired to get candidates more involved in the assessment process. Roughly every other day, the instructor asked candidates to use one of these rubrics to evaluate their performance on a short quiz after comparing their work with an exemplar solution. To allow some autonomy and choice in this process, and thereby promote intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985), candidates selected which of the two rubrics they preferred to use. Both the product and the self-evaluation were then reviewed by the instructor. The process of candidates critically reflecting on their performance and comparing their self-evaluation with their instructor's evaluation provided timely, targeted feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of their performance. It was particularly illuminating when a candidate identified a mistake as "minor" that the instructor would characterize as a significant misconception; these occurrences opened up wonderful learning opportunities, increasing both the amount and the academic quality of candidate-instructor interactions.

Although these rubrics were developed for use in a mathematics

education content course, with minor wording changes they could be used with various types of assignments or projects within a teacher education program. In an educational psychology course, rubrics like these could be used when candidates analyze video clips to discern students' developmental levels. In an assessment course, they could be used when candidates describe the benefits and challenges of different grading approaches. In a classroom management course, they could be used when candidates analyze the motivational theories underlying various classroom management strategies. In each of these settings, the instructor can encourage self-evaluation by providing the rubric to students at the time the assignment is explained and by explicitly inviting students to evaluate their own work against the rubric. To use rubrics for peer evaluation, we use an early due-date for in-class peer evaluation and a later one for instructor evaluation. We have found that using the rubric to guide an in-class exercise of peer evaluation promotes deep in-class discussions, supports growth, and results in stronger final products.

Table 2
First-level Holistic, General Rubric Used by Students to Evaluate Their Own Perfomance

Level	Description of Performance
3	Shows complete understanding
2.5	Made a trivial mistake; shows understanding
2	Good start; shows partial understanding or relies heavily on guess and check to obtain answers
1	Sustained effort; shows limited understanding
0	No sustained effort; does not show understanding

Table 3
Six-level Holistic, General Rubric Used by Students to Evaluate Their Own Performance

Level	Description of Performance
Distinguished 5	I demonstrated complete understanding. My answers and explanations are clear and correct. I could help others understand this.
Proficient 4	I demonstrated understanding, but made minor mistakes or portions of my explanation were unclear or missing details.
Nearing Proficiency 3	I made some progress and showed some understanding but I made a significant error, omitted part of the analysis, or my explanation was weak.
Limited proficiency 2	I struggled with this one. I have some correct ideas, but my response suggests I do not yet fully understand this concept or I did not have time to finish it.
Incomplete 1	My work suggests I may have some significant misconceptions to overcome regarding this topic.
0	I did not attempt this task, or I had no idea where to begin.

Our candidates' experiences using rubrics for self-evaluation and peer evaluation prepared them for the work of developing and using rubrics for formative assessment of their future PK–12 students' work. We have sometimes provided candidates with practice in rubric construction by involving them in the co-construction of rubrics. The second and third authors used this process to develop a rubric that would eventually become part of a new portfolio assessment based on accreditation guidelines for secondary mathematics field experiences. After introducing the accreditation standards, we collaborated with our candidates to draft language that would describe how high, medium, and low levels of candidate proficiency might appear in the context of their current field experiences. Co-constructing an initial draft of the rubric gave our candidates a voice in establishing the criteria by which their work and the work of future candidates would be evaluated, and it invited them more fully into the assessment process. Once the initial framework was established, the instructors worked to refine

the rubric before inviting candidates to offer a final review of the criteria we developed. Our collaborative effort struck a balance between empowering our candidates and heeding the cautionary advice offered by Wiliam (2001):

> It is important to note that developing learning intentions or success criteria with students is most definitely not a democratic process. The teacher is in a privileged position with respect to the subject being taught and knows more about the subject than the students do, and it would be an abdication of the teacher's responsibilities to let whatever the students feel should be valued be adopted as the learning intentions (p. 59).

Wiliam's advice is relevant both to PK–12 teachers and to teacher educators. Inviting students to collaborate with the instructor in developing rubrics works well on aspects of the learning process that students are already familiar with such as engagement, online discussions, or presentations. Inviting candidates to co-construct a rubric for learning targets they are unfamiliar with is unproductive because they do not know what the road to proficiency looks like if it is a road they have never traveled.

Conclusions and Recommendations

We have found that the use of rubrics supports and improves our teaching effectiveness. When we used rubrics only for summative assessment, it improved the objectivity of our grading. But once we began to intentionally use rubrics in formative assessment and involved our teacher candidates more in the assessment process, we began to see marked improvements in their performance. As candidates spent more class time on self- and peer evaluation by applying the rubric criteria to their own work, they began to develop a better understanding of the criteria, and their performances improved. On writing assignments, we have found rubric-based peer evaluation to be very helpful to our candidates as they gain timely feedback they can use to revise, rethink, and refine their work prior to submitting it for grading. As we continue to use

rubrics for formative assessment, we are seeing candidates becoming more invested in their learning and more focused on their own improvement rather than simply striving for a particular grade.

Using rubrics in formative assessment has also influenced the affective aspects of our courses. Candidates who are regularly engaged in peer assessment become aware of both their own strengths and weaknesses and those of their peers. They develop a degree of trust of one another's judgments and learn to seek one another's input, becoming true collaborators in learning. As candidates are brought into the assessment process, they begin to understand that the professor is there to help them learn the content, not solely to judge the adequacy of their knowledge. As they come to see their instructor's eagerness to support their progress, they become more willing to ask questions and become more engaged in the course.

For teacher educators, the parallels to the PK–12 classroom are obvious. We want our candidates to use effective formative assessments, to engage their students in self- and peer evaluation, and to encourage their students to become more invested in their own learning. As we model these practices, we also need to make them explicit to our teacher candidates to increase the likelihood that they will implement effective formative assessment practices in their own classrooms. We believe that the use of rubrics can play a vital role in this process.

For teacher educators who are not yet using rubrics, we have several recommendations. First, beginning to use a rubric, even if it will be used only for summative evaluation, requires reflection on the essential elements of learning. In the process of developing a rubric, the instructor clarifies what knowledge and skills candidates are expected to demonstrate in the assignment or project. Thinking about one's current mechanism for assessing those elements and trying to characterize in words that which you typically see in a poor performance and that which you would like to see in an exemplary one is key. This process enables one to develop a rubric around these ideas, share it with candidates when the task is introduced, and use it to evaluate their submitted work. In our

experience, the process of developing a rubric helps to clarify and communicate our expectations to our candidates. Applying the rubric to candidates' work and providing each candidate with a marked copy showing their evaluation against the established criteria enhances the feedback process. Using rubrics for summative assessment is a good way to begin, as it allows the instructor to make adjustments to the rubric before inviting candidates to use it for self-assessment.

For teacher educators who are using rubrics in summative assessment, we highly recommend explicitly engaging your candidates in rubric-based self- or peer evaluation. We predict this will have a positive impact on candidates' learning and will help them to become more invested in their own progress toward proficiency. This will require that the rubric be written in such a way that the levels are seen as supporting progress rather than just sorting levels of proficiency. It will also require that candidates be explicitly introduced to how rubrics work, understand what specific rubrics say, and be given a chance to apply the rubrics to their own work and make revisions as needed. Once candidates have practiced using a rubric for self-evaluation, we recommend engaging them in rubric-based peer evaluation. Our experiences have paralleled those of Orsmond, Merry, and Callaghan (2004) in that rubric-based peer evaluation has increased the level of our candidates' dialogue and discussion, thereby deepening their understanding of evaluation criteria.

We would like to emphasize that the rubrics we have presented here are not perfect. Each of us continues to review and revise our rubrics from semester to semester, and in doing so we continue to clarify our own expectations and the clarity with which we communicate them to our candidates as we strive for continued alignment with our desired learning outcomes. Our use of rubrics has become an important tool for providing clear feedback that our learners can use to improve their performances. Using rubrics has improved the quality of our teaching.

Finally, we are aware that rubrics are not all alike. The rubrics discussed in this paper are general rubrics, intended for use with

multiple assignments. Other rubrics may be "task-specific" (Popham, 2011). Such rubrics can be very useful and could also be used in formative evaluation. However, it is important to note that when rubrics are too specific, it becomes possible for students to use the rubric only as a recipe for a successful grade, without understanding deeper concepts they should be learning. Reynolds-Keefer (2010) referred to this as students using the rubric as a "map or laundry list of things that are required to complete an assignment" (p. 6). Still, depending on the nature of the content, the maturity of the students, and other factors, there may be situations in which a task-specific rubric is preferred.

We are also aware that the degree to which a rubric is helpful in improving our teaching is highly dependent on both the quality of the rubric and the way it is used. We agree with Mansilla, Duraisingh, Wolfe, and Haynes et al. (2009) that "the power of a rubric rests on the degree to which it captures meaningful dimensions of the work without which a quality product could not be achieved" (p. 337). To promote meaningful learning, students should complete authentic tasks and receive relevant, timely feedback on the important components of their work. We must also help our students develop the skills to evaluate their own work. This is true at both undergraduate and PK–12 levels. A well-crafted rubric can be a useful tool toward achieving those ends.

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