

Classroom Management, Bullying, and Teacher Practices

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Abstract

While bullying in schools has begun to receive attention, little is known about the relationship between classroom management and bullying in the classroom. The process for exploring this relationship will be a review of research and literature related to bullying in the school environment, classroom management, teacher practices, and student behavior. Research from a number of fields suggests that several variables conspire to create environments where bullying is more likely to occur. These include harsh and punitive discipline methods, lower-quality classroom instruction, disorganized classroom and school settings, and student social structures characterized by antisocial behaviors. Future directions indicate a need for preservice and in-service education on classroom management practices and student bullying. Additionally, future research should consider an investigation of the relationship between classroom management practices and student bullying, as well as further exploration of teacher bullying of students and student bullying of teachers.

Introduction

Teaching can be a daunting endeavor—for both experts and novice teachers. It is a profession that requires the ability to be responsive to new demands and changing needs. In recent years, school reform promoting high-stakes testing in the name of improving academic achievement has dominated the list of problems demanding consideration. However, there are other problems that also demand attention—for example, bullying.

Although not a new problem, attention to bullying was limited until the events at Columbine High School in April, 1999. In recent years, research has implicated teasing, harassment, and bullying in a number of the targeted school shootings that have taken place in the United States (Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002). Data indicate that bullying is embedded in a larger problem of school violence.

There is another perhaps related issue that has received less attention but is nevertheless a concern for educators: classroom management. Research over the past few decades has consistently indicated that new teachers feel unprepared when it comes to classroom management skills (Duck, 2007; Freiberg, 2002; Meister & Melnick, 2003; Merrett & Wheldall, 1993; Stoughton, 2007) and that they are often unprepared to function successfully in today's classrooms with regard to managing administrative tasks, curriculum, and behavior problems (Allen & Blackston, 2003; Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Kirkpatrick, Lincoln, & Morrow, 2006; Public Agenda, 2004; Thompson & Walter, 1998). Additionally, it is a well-established fact that student misbehavior is a factor in teacher burnout and the decision of novice teachers to leave the profession (Public Agenda, 2004). It seems that the need for successful classroom management skills has not diminished during a time when school reform has put the spotlight on academic testing and student achievement.

Thus, it is important to ask the following questions: What is the nature of bullying in the classroom? How is it manifested? Is there a connection between school bullying in the

classroom and classroom management? If so, what is it? Would it be beneficial to consider these two issues together? How do teachers learn classroom management skills? How do they learn about bullying? When and where does learning about these two issues intersect? Through a review of research literature related to bullying in the school environment, the purpose of this paper is to explore the relationships between classroom bullying, classroom management, and teacher practices.

Theoretical Framework

This review of research approaches the issues of classroom management, bullying in the classroom, and teacher practices from a social-ecological perspective. Swearer and Espelage (2004) note that Bronfenbrenner (1979) described ecological-systems theory as purporting that “all individuals are part of interrelated systems that locate the individual at the center and move out from the center to include all systems that affect the individual” (p. 3). Drawing upon Bronfenbrenner’s ecological-systems theory (1979), Swearer and Espelage “argue that bullying has to be understood across individual, family, peer, school, and community contexts” (p. 1). Adopting this perspective assumes that the relationships of students to one another and the teacher within classrooms are reciprocal and interconnected. In other words, the actions of all members of the classroom affect the behaviors of everyone in that environment, creating a dynamic context and culture.

Classroom Management

What Is Classroom Management?

A narrow view of classroom management sees it primarily as discipline and management of student misbehavior. However, successful teaching requires more than controlling student behavior. According to Evertson and Harris (1999), “the meaning of the term classroom management has changed from describing discipline practices and behavioral interventions to serving as a more holistic descriptor of teachers’ actions in orchestrating supportive learning environments and building community” (p. 60). Brophy (1999) echoed those sentiments when he stated that “the most successful teachers approach management as a process of establishing and maintaining effective learning environments” (p. 44). Finally, Larrivee (2005) noted that “classroom management is a critical ingredient in the three-way mix of effective teaching strategies, which includes meaningful content, powerful teaching strategies, and an organizational structure to support productive learning” (p. vi). Successful teachers employ strategies “for establishing rules and procedures, organizing groups, monitoring and pacing classroom events, and reacting to misbehavior” (Borko & Putnam, 1995, p. 41), and, when done well, it “looks seamless, even invisible” (Randolph & Evertson, 1995, p. 17). Despite an understanding that classroom management is a complex set of skills that includes much more than being able to influence and control student behavior, there remains an overall impression that classroom management is primarily about ‘discipline.’

Discipline and Classroom Management

Discipline’s “most typical current meaning seems to be most associated with the notion of bringing children into line” (Skiba & Peterson, 2003, p. 66); how teachers accomplish that is often determined by their assumptions about how children learn, grow, and develop. Texts on classroom management and discipline often suggest strategies that are organized into models

that reflect philosophical approaches that are commensurate with these assumptions. On the behavioristic end of the continuum is the position that humans are by nature bad and greatly in need of control, and on the humanistic end of the continuum is the position that humans are basically good and need to be guided. Teacher beliefs and assumptions about children fall somewhere along this continuum, and ultimately these philosophical assumptions are likely to influence the discipline model or management practices that a teacher chooses to employ. On the humanistic end of the continuum are democratic models that see misbehavior as an opportunity to learn. On the behavioristic end of the continuum are strategies that make use of punishment, coercion, and rewards. Thus, how a teacher manages student behavior is impacted by his or her assumptions about children, the models he or she adopts, and the strategies that are commensurate with these models.

How Do Teachers Learn Classroom Management Practices?

The first place teachers learn classroom management practices is in the very classrooms that they inhabited for thirteen or more years as students. Research indicates (Fajet, Bello, Leftwich, Mesler, & Shaver, 2005) that preservice teachers develop perceptions about classroom management from their own experiences as students, and that they bring these perceptions with them when they enroll in teacher preparation courses. Research also indicates that these perceptions persist well into teachers early years of teaching.

A second place that teachers learn classroom management practices is in the schools where they do field observations and student teaching. It can be assumed that the impact of this learning is determined by the variety and quality of what students observe in actual classrooms. If the modeling of veteran teachers is all of one sort, or if it is of poor quality, preservice teachers may have a limited set of skills to emulate, some of which may be of uncertain value.

Lastly, preservice educators may have opportunities to learn about classroom management in their college classes. Given the nature of teacher education in America, it is difficult to say how many preservice educators are exposed to high-quality classroom management information in their coursework.

In-service teachers continue to learn about classroom management, but usually in far less formal ways. Teachers may attend professional development workshops that deal with management and behavior issues, or they may initiate learning on their own, seeking out books and materials that offer insight and support for dealing with behavior and management problems in the classroom. Teachers, however, are part of communities of practice (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002) where they often share knowledge with one another. Learning is situated in contexts, and school is a context where adults as well as students learn from one another. "Learning, thinking, and knowing are relations among people in activity in, with, and arising from the socially and culturally constructed world" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 51). Thus, teachers' beliefs, knowledge, ideas, and practices with regard to classroom management are affected by the social context of the school and by teachers' contact with one another.

Bullying in Schools

Bullying: Prevalence, Definitions, and Issues

In the largest survey of bullying in schools in the United States to date (Nansel, Overpeck, Pila, Ruan, Simmons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001), 29.9% of students were found to be involved in

bullying dynamics: 13% as bullies, 10.6% as victims, and 6.3% as bully-victims.¹ These numbers indicate that bullying among students is a problem of serious concern in U.S. schools.

Olweus (1993) defines *bullying* or *victimization* in the following way: "A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students" (p. 9). Implicit in Olweus's definition is an imbalance of power between the aggressor and the target. Stemming from research that looks at bullying from a social systems/dialectical theory of power dynamics, Twemlow, Fonagy, and Sacco (2001) add to Olweus's conceptualization in a rather chilling expansion:

We can now redefine bullying in schools as the repeated exposure of an individual or group to negative interactions (social aggression) by one or more dominant persons. The person(s) enjoys the discomfort and shame of the victim as if in a sadomasochistic ritual enacted for the perverse public enjoyment of an audience of bystanders who do nothing and may vicariously be aroused as bullies or victims. (p. 278)

However, bullying of students by students is not the only issue that schools face. There is a limited amount of literature that addresses adult bullying of students and student bullying of adults. Twemlow and Fonagy (2005) defined a bullying teacher as "one who uses his or her power to punish, manipulate, or disparage a student beyond what would be a reasonable disciplinary procedure" (p. 2387). Twemlow, Fonagy, Sacco, and Brethour (2006) found in a survey of 116 elementary school teachers that 45% admitted to having bullied a student (p. 194). In a qualitative study using discourse and conversational analyses where teachers were asked about teacher bullying of students (Hepburn, 2000), at least one teacher openly admitted to having bullied students. In a recent study conducted in Ireland (James, Lawlor, Courtney, Flynn, Henry, & Murphy, 2008), researchers examined bullying at two points in time in a secondary school and found that "thirty percent of students said they were bullied by teachers at both times" (p. 160). In a rather indirect indictment of teachers who bully students, Spitalli (2005) offers ten 'don'ts' of student discipline. Of the suggestions, four directly or indirectly infer that teachers bully students. One suggestion explicitly warns teachers not to bully students as it is "unconscionable and amounts to professional malpractice" (p. 30). Another addresses the issue of teaching through coercion (p. 30). Additionally, the author sees deliberate humiliation and sarcasm as forms of bullying (p. 30–31). Although there is limited research on adult bullying of students in schools, it is clear this problem exists and that it could be linked to classroom management practices.

Likewise, there is scant information on teachers being bullied by students, although one study in the United Kingdom found that high school teachers were bullied in the previous semester, 56.4% by students at least once, 35.6% by students sometimes or more, and 9.9% by students several times a week (Andrew, 1998, p. 263). In addition, this study found that almost half of teachers who had been bullied by students responded by bullying the student back (p. 264). The frightening aspect of this is that students and teachers may get caught up in a reciprocal exchange that destroys the professionalism of the relationship and encourages mutual aggression.

¹ "'Bullies' are students who have engaged in bullying and have never been victimized by bullying. 'Victims' are students who have been victimized by bullies, but have never bullied. 'Bully-victims' are students who have bullied and have been bullied" (Nansel et al., 2001).

“Teachers are critical in determining the school climate. Thus their attitudes to power dynamics are extremely relevant” (Twemlow et al., 2006, p. 189). Although this paper does not endeavor to explore the issue of workplace bullying and the possible existence of administrator bullying of teachers, there is certainly the likelihood that some schools and districts are characterized by adult bullying of adults. School climate is probably affected to some degree by the existence of adult bullying of adults, and this dynamic is likely to affect how adults within schools and districts treat children. If, as Twemlow states above, teacher behaviors contribute to school climate, it is very likely that the treatment of teachers by administrators also affects school climate.

A social-ecological perspective requires the consideration of bullying on multiple levels, suggesting that if adults bully each other, if adults bully students, and if students bully adults, a culture can develop that supports student-to-student bullying. In other words, if adults engage in bullying one another and students, then it is reasonable to expect that students will bully one another, and sometimes adults as well.

Teacher Knowledge of Bullying

Before teachers can prevent or intervene in bullying situations, they have to be able to recognize it. Research tells us that many teachers do not possess the knowledge or skills to recognize bullying behaviors among their students. Holt and Keyes (2004) report that “a greater proportion of studies have found that teachers report lower prevalence rates of bullying than students do” (p. 122), which likely indicates that students are aware of bullying to a much greater extent than teachers. In a study of prospective teachers’ understanding of bullying, Craig, Henderson, and Murphy (2000) found that “interactions involving physical aggression was labeled as bullying more often, viewed as more serious and considered more worthy of intervention than verbal aggression” (p. 14). Boulton (1997) found that teachers tended to see more egregious behaviors such as physical assault and verbal threats as bullying, but did not consider name calling, spreading mean gossip, or intimidating looks as bullying. In a very recent study, Bauman and Del Rio (2006) discovered that “preservice teachers considered relational bullying to be less serious than other forms of bullying” (p. 225). Considering the negative impact of relational aggression (Simmons, 2002), it is critical for teachers to be able to identify social and relational bullying as well as the more overt and obvious forms of verbal and physical bullying.

In a very unusual and poignant comment by researchers who observed student interactions on playgrounds, the author of a study notes the discrepancy between teacher perceptions and reality:

We learned that teachers had no problem identifying the aggressive children who were disruptive in class. These children often had difficulty managing frustration and frequently got in trouble with adults. In addition, many were favorite targets for bullying. Their exaggerated emotional responses provided an entertaining spectacle for their tormentors. From our vantage point as playground observers, we concluded that these poorly regulated children comprised the most visible, but not necessarily the most abusive aggressors on the playground. That distinction was sometimes held by model students, ones that teachers assured us were “no problem.” Based on these students’ upstanding

classroom behavior and engaging manner, few adults would suspect the cruel behavior we observed. (Frey, 2005, p. 410)

What is striking about this observation is that it seems very possible for teachers who appear to have perfectly behaved classes to provide havens for bullies that shelter them against detection. This speaks to the savvy ability of some bullies to manipulate the classroom environments of well meaning, yet unsuspecting teachers, and to hide behind facades of innocence. It is evident this is a bullying situation teachers need help recognizing.

In a survey of preservice teachers in the United Kingdom, respondents were asked a series of questions regarding the importance of training on bullying (Nicolaidis, Toda, & Smith, 2002). More than half of the teacher trainees indicated that they believed information on bullying was valuable and essential. They wanted to know explicitly how to talk to bullies and targets, and they were interested in knowing how to develop a whole-school policy on bullying (Nicolaidis, Toda, & Smith, 2002).

It appears that many preservice teachers are concerned about the problem of bullying, that they often have limited knowledge of the issue, and that they desire to learn more about it before assuming their roles as classroom teachers. Likewise, in-service teachers may have a need to acquire information that reflects the true nature and extent of the problem of bullying in schools.

Prevention and Intervention

How then do teachers learn about prevention and intervention with regard to bullying? First of all, as previously noted, teachers may learn about bullying through rather informal mechanisms such as their own life experiences, through seeking out and reading materials about the problem, or by attending workshops and presentations devoted to the subject of bullying. In a more formal capacity, however, teachers may acquire knowledge through schools' adoptions of bullying prevention programs. Most, if not all of these programs, are accompanied by training aimed at helping teachers understand the problems of bullying and violence, learn how to respond to instances of bullying and violence, and modify their interactions with students such that bullying and violence within the school are likely to decrease. Very often these programs advocate policy development as well as realignment of the school or classroom code of conduct and behavior management systems. Teachers are also often called upon to teach students social skills that reduce the likelihood of interpersonal conflict. What is most interesting about these various programs is that they seldom address teachers' classroom management practices and how they may contribute to the existence of bullying within the classroom.

The Link Between Classroom Management and Bullying

Parenting Styles and Teaching Styles

Research by Baumrind (1996) has greatly contributed to our understanding of parenting styles and the impact of those styles on children's development. This research suggests that bullies and victims tend to come from families where parenting is either passive or authoritarian, and that children who come from homes where they have experienced authoritative parenting are less likely to be involved in either bullying or victimization. Using

Baumrind's descriptions of passive, authoritative, and authoritarian parenting styles², Sullivan, Cleary, and Sullivan (2004), connect these styles to teacher practices and classroom environment.

An analysis of the literature on good teaching practice and styles reveals universal support for an authoritative style. The authoritative teacher is demonstrably in control of the classroom environment, and has a clear agenda and purpose, while encouraging the individual members of the class to develop their self-determination and independence within reasonable boundaries. (p. 72)

The authors claim that in classrooms that are managed in ways other than with an authoritative style, a bullying culture can develop. Thus, Sullivan et al. (2004) suggest that there is a connection between how teachers treat their students, which is expressed through their classroom management behaviors, and the presence or absence of bullying in a classroom. Just as parenting practices create a context and culture for development that either promotes bullying or does not, so too do teachers' classroom management practices contribute to a context or culture that either promotes or discourages bullying.

Negative School Environments

All teachers want to have positive interactions with students in a classroom where students are motivated, engaged, and positive about learning, but not all teachers are able to create such an environment. In fact, there is a line of research that developed a profile of the classroom context that makes it virtually impossible to create the type of positive learning environment just described. Mayer (2002) enumerated the variables that "appear to contribute to punitive school environments that promote antisocial behavior" (p. 85):

1. an over-reliance on punitive methods of control;
2. unclear rules for student department;
3. lack of administrative support for staff, little staff support of one another, and a lack of staff agreement with policies;
4. academic failure experiences;
5. students lacking critical social skills that form the basis of doing well academically and relating positively to others, such as persistence on task, complying with requests, paying attention, negotiating differences, handling criticism and teasing;
6. a misuse of behavior management procedures;
7. lack of student involvement;
8. lack of understanding or appropriate responding to student differences. (p. 85)

² *Passive* parenting is characterized by few limits, lax or arbitrary discipline, and either over- or under-involvement. (Parents either ignore children or smother them.) Children have excessive freedom. *Authoritative* parenting is characterized by reasonable rules and discipline that is caring and supportive of change. Children are treated with dignity and love is unconditional. Children learn to exercise freedom responsibly. *Authoritarian* parenting is characterized by rigid enforcement of rules and power-assertive discipline. Children have little autonomy and love is highly conditional. Children have very little if any freedom.

In summary, it seems that coercive, chaotic, disconnected, and uncaring school environments promote or permit the existence of antisocial, bullying, and violent cultures within classrooms and schools.

Disruptive Behavior

A disruptive interaction between teacher and student can sometimes trigger a chain of actions and reactions that spirals out of control, leading to coercion, chaos, and damage. In a study of teachers' perceptions of disruptive behavior, Malone, Bonitz, and Rickett (1998) wrote:

The results of this study confirmed common perceptions about disruptive behavior in the classroom. Time spent trying to control a class is time taken away from instruction. The teacher is simply less effective when instructional time is interrupted. Disruptive behavior creates teacher-student conflicts, which cause undesirable interpersonal conditions for both teachers and students. The teachers reported overwhelmingly that disruptive behavior allowed to continue on a large scale destroys teacher morale. It also creates parental dissatisfaction and a negative image of the school. For individuals, disruptive behavior contributes to low self-concept, peer conflicts, and disunity among the students. (Conclusion, ¶ 1)

Disruptive behavior in schools is not new, but the advent of inclusionary policies regarding special education students coupled with a perception that our society is increasingly antisocial and violent, has prompted educators to look for better ways of regulating student behavior in schools. One approach that has been effective is Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS), a program that grew out of the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis and "represents a major departure from traditional reactive disciplinary practices" (Safran & Oswald, 2003, p. 362). A complete explanation of PBS is beyond the scope of this paper, but what is useful for the purpose at hand is a discussion of the elements of PBS that coincide with positive discipline practices and effective teaching in schools.

PBS encourages teachers to be proactive and positive rather than reactive and negative with regards to behavioral management strategies. Included in this model is the need to structure the classroom environment so that negative behaviors don't occur, and that when they do, teachers should try to avoid the repetition of ineffective intervention strategies. Barbetta, Norona, and Bocard (2005) note that when teachers find their response to student misbehavior isn't working, instead of trying an alternative approach, they usually "try harder negatively" (p. 12). The authors suggest that teachers who find themselves in this situation try other tactics such as "redirecting, proximity control, reinforcing incompatible behaviors, changing academic tasks, and providing additional cues or prompts" (p. 13). Ultimately, repeating ineffective behavioral management strategies may cause the escalation of problem behaviors that could lead to bullying on the part of the teacher and/or the student.

Several of the major recommendations of PBS focus on classroom management practices such as the development of rules and consequences, and the teaching of social skills. "Classroom rules should be simple, specific, clear, and measurable" (Barbetta et al., 2005, p. 14), limited in number, and should be created with student input (p. 14). Rules should be stated positively, posted and reviewed routinely, and role-played and practiced so that

students know what to do to follow them. PBS also advocates teaching students social skills such as empathy, anger management, social problem solving, and conflict resolution. Assuming that students know these skills when they may not, sets them and their teachers up for reactive and negative, rather than proactive and positive, disciplinary situations.

As noted above, a contributing factor to teacher stress, classroom chaos, and interrupted learning is the atmosphere that is created when a conflict develops between a teacher and a student. Barbetta et al. (2005) noted that when students misbehave, “it often feels like a personal attack” (p. 18), and as such can set up an ill-prepared teacher for a situation where the reaction is likely to be coercive.

Quality Instruction and Classroom Behaviors

As noted earlier, classroom management is not solely about managing behaviors. A critical component is the academic program and how it is delivered.

The first line of defense in managing student behavior is effective instruction ... when teachers demystify learning, achievement and behavior improve dramatically. Examples of how to demystify learning include students establishing his or her learning goals, student monitoring his or her own learning, involving students in developing classroom rules and procedures, and relating lessons to students’ own lives and interests. (Barbetta et al., 2005, p. 17)

Carolyn Everston, creator of Classroom Organization and Management Program (COMP), a professional development program for teachers, has addressed the issue of how classroom management looks in a learner-centered environment (Evertson & Neal, 2006). The authors state that “a redefinition of management must address the interrelationship of management and instruction and how these relate to educational goals” (p. 1). They see the purpose of learning as threefold: (1) to foster academic growth and development, (2) to promote moral development through self-regulation and a sense of responsibility, and (3) to promote social interconnectedness (pp. 3–5). Evertson and Neal (2006) note that learner-centered classrooms are characterized by flexible room arrangements; varied social forums that allow for small- and large-group work, and independent work; multiple sources of information (as opposed to the teacher acting as the sole source of knowledge); and a more fluid and effective use of time (pp. 6–8).

In classrooms like this, rules such as ‘raise your hand when you want to talk’ don’t make sense, so teachers are required to develop a management system that matches the learning activities that occur in their classrooms. These systems create a positive dynamic that “may look seamless, yet is carefully orchestrated at a complex level” (Evertson & Neal, 2006, p. 8). These systems include strategies such as “community building, establishing classroom rules and norms, and practicing classroom procedures” (p. 8) at the very beginning of the school year. They also embrace an “approach to classroom management [that shifts] from teacher direction and control to an emphasis on student engagement, self-regulation, and community responsibility with teacher guidance” (p. 8).

Developments in the learning sciences indicate that the transmission model of learning is no longer meeting the needs of students (National Research Council, 2000). Learner-centered classrooms focus on high-quality learning activities, proactive vs. reactive academic and

behavioral responses to students' needs, and a shared responsibility for learning, classroom organization, and behavior. In essence, these classrooms are ones where authoritative teaching is occurring.

Bullying and Classroom Management

What about the problem of bullying as it relates to classroom management? Roland and Galloway (2002) studied the impact of classroom management and bullying. Not only did they discover that classroom management correlated with whether bullying took place among students, but they also discovered that there was a mediating variable related to whether bullying occurred at all. That mediating variable was the social structure of the class (Roland & Galloway, 2002). Social structure included the informal relationships among students and encompassed "friendship, support, attraction, isolation, power and relations between subgroups" (p. 302). It is interesting to note that the variable 'management' was created by measuring and summing four teacher traits or practices: "caring, teaching, monitoring and intervention" (p. 302). Although a correlation study, the authors state "that it makes it reasonable to argue, but does not necessarily demonstrate, that our own results of quite strong relations between management, the social structure of the class and amount of bullying have a parallel causal structure" (p. 310). The findings of this study suggest that when teachers care about students, when they organize classrooms such that positive student relationships develop, and when they manage learning and behavioral issues in positive, educative ways, students are far less likely to engage in or experience bullying. It seems that there is perhaps a bidirectional and reciprocal interaction among all three variables: management practices, bullying, and the social structure of the class.

In a study done in Japan, the author came to a somewhat similar conclusion regarding bullying and its relationship to the social environment:

These findings suggest that bullying is not a simple problem which occurs in relations between bully-student and bullied-student, but it is a complicated problem which must be solved by means of the development of the social environment of the class, that of the school, and that of the home as well as that of society. (Kikkawa, 1987, p. 29)

Research from several lines of study suggests connections between classroom management, bullying in classrooms, teacher practices, and classroom social structure; yet, these connections have not been fully explored. Future research on bullying in schools should consider investigating these other contextual variables as they may offer new insights into how to prevent or reduce school bullying.

Summary

The purpose of this paper was to consider whether there is a link among three variables: classroom management, school bullying, and teacher practices. Classrooms and schools that use coercion and punishment to deal with inappropriate student behavior tend to have negative, hostile environments. Additionally, schools and classrooms that are authoritarian and are characterized by rigid, adult-centered authority tend to use more coercion and punishment to get students to behave. Furthermore, schools and classrooms where teaching is of low quality or does not reflect current knowledge regarding learning and

best practices, have more student problems, are more likely to be authoritarian, and are more likely to attempt to influence student behavior through coercion and punishment. Lastly, the social structure and dynamics of schools and classrooms of this sort promote an environment that makes bullying and victimization possible.

Implications

Bullying doesn't occur in a vacuum. A host of factors contribute to its existence, and one of them is how teachers manage their classrooms and respond to inappropriate student behavior. School reform that encourages learner-centered classrooms based on what we know about new developments in the learning sciences is a positive step. Efforts to help teachers increase their depth of content knowledge, as well as their pedagogical content knowledge (i.e. present content in ways that actively engage learners and promote deep understanding as opposed to rote memorization), are also important contributors to an environment that discourages bullying. However, unless teachers come to the classroom with skills that allow them to establish a culture that proactively minimizes student behavior problems and at the same time allows them to intervene in positive, educative, effective ways when students are disruptive, there is likely to be an environment that is predisposed to bullying problems.

Future Directions

In large part, the locus of change lies in preservice and in-service teacher education. Those responsible for preparing teachers to teach and those who develop and provide professional staff development for educators need to address these issues.

Preservice teacher education. Research on preservice preparation of teachers indicates that graduates need more exposure to course content and involvement in field experiences that help them develop effective behavior management skills. In the past, this topic has often been relegated to either methods courses or psychology courses on child or adolescent development. In most cases, teacher education students don't learn what they need to know. Additionally, it is important for colleges and universities to place students in schools and classrooms where they will see educators modeling positive and respectful behavior management strategies. Preservice teachers will learn all the wrong things if they observe and imitate teachers who misuse their power, teach via skill-and-drill methods, use sarcasm, or bully students.

Preservice teachers also need field experiences that allow them to observe high-quality teaching right from the beginning of the school year. Too often, field experiences don't allow novices to see the preparation and groundwork that successful teachers lay during the first few days of school. When it looks as easy as some teachers make it appear, preservice teachers form an impression that classroom organization is simple and effortless.

In-service teacher education. Professional development for in-service education is moving away from stand-alone, outside expert offerings, and moving toward a model that aligns with the new science of learning. To that end, peer coaching and mentoring are two vehicles that may provide teachers with the necessary structure and support to learn about, practice, and reflect on changing their classroom management practices. It goes without saying, however, that such efforts need to be supported by informed and progressive administrators who understand current research and who themselves foster communities of learners among their staff members.

Future Research

Research is severely lacking in several areas: teacher-to-student bullying, student-to-teacher bullying, and adult-to-adult bullying in schools. Each of these dynamics needs to be studied to discover how they affect the school environment and contribute to bullying in schools.

Much more needs to be known about teachers who bully students: why they do it, what triggers it, what kinds of environments they teach in, how they interact with colleagues, what their beliefs are about students and learning, why they chose teaching as a career, what their goals are for themselves and their students, and what role leadership plays in the schools they teach in. The challenge, of course, will be to find schools, administrators, and teachers who will welcome research that may expose their weaknesses.

On the other hand, teachers are likely to welcome research that develops more knowledge around students who bully teachers. Certainly it would be helpful to understand the context in which students bully adults, how and why they do it, and what effect it has on the environment of the school and classroom. Research along this line may provide insights into more effective ways to interact with these students and shape their behavior in more positive ways.

If adults in school bully one another, it is likely to affect how the adults treat children. It would be useful to explore the role of adult behaviors toward one another and how that behavior impacts school climate and problems with bullying. However, research in this area may be challenging to conduct, as schools where adults exhibit these traits may not be receptive to investigation of adult behaviors.

Knowledge of teacher practices, particularly around pedagogy, indicates that best practices include learner-centered environments where teachers foster student autonomy through engaging learning activities. It may be that classrooms of this sort have less bullying than traditionally organized classrooms. Educators would greatly benefit from a line of research that explores the relationship between teacher practice and pedagogy and bullying in the classroom.

Lastly, it would be very helpful to expand our knowledge of the connections between classroom management practices and bullying in schools. This paper has built a case for such a connection, but it rests on numerous, somewhat disparate sources of information. More direct research would certainly be beneficial.

Conclusions

Bullying begets bullying and aggression begets aggression. When a child disrupts a class and challenges a teacher, publicly embarrassing or belittling him or her, the teacher may react with anger, hostility, and coercion. In other words, when bullied, some teachers bully back. In some schools, teachers themselves feel under attack in rather the same way from administrators or parents. Concurrently, in many schools there is a serious problem of peer bullying that can go undetected by adults, but this may be a significant contributor to school violence and a negative school climate. Regardless of the genesis of bullying, antisocial, or violent behavior, the reaction in schools is often to make more rules, increase the severity of punishment for rule infractions, and expel more students from school, all of which exacerbate the problems that educators are trying to solve. These problems may also be compounded by teacher practice and pedagogy that does not reflect current knowledge of learner-centered

environments and where students are more likely to experience skill-and-drill methods. Solving these problems requires that we deal successfully with the convergence of classroom management, bullying in classrooms, and effective teaching practices, and in order to do this, research needs to investigate how these variables are reciprocally related to one another. Lastly, those who facilitate teacher learning need to discuss these issues in preservice and in-service education.

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A Local Solution to a National Problem: Preparing Preservice Candidates for Urban Middle Schools

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Abstract

A midwestern urban school district received a Teacher Quality Enhancement (TQE) grant from the U.S. Office of Education to deliver specialized middle-level urban teacher preparation. Five colleges and universities and the school district participated in the 5-year project. This article describes the first course in the TQE "urban strand." The course was developed by a committee representing the district and higher education partners and was cotaught at the local community college by a middle school teacher and a teacher educator from a private, 4-year college. Data indicate that cross-institutional course design is viable and that collaborative efforts help teacher educators to understand the local context, stay involved, and establish a credible presence in urban schools.

Introduction

The Holmes Group (1986, 1990, 1995) has advanced the notion that school–university partnerships can lead to simultaneous reform of public schools and teacher education. Urban school districts, in particular, have worked with local universities to develop professional development schools (PDS); in a PDS, preservice candidates are exposed to a culture that includes ongoing professional development and active involvement of university personnel (National Association for Professional Development Schools, 2008).

Urban school districts are large, complex organizations with many challenges. The architects of the PDF model anticipated that these sites would be only a small subset of a district's school buildings (Holmes, 1990). With increased pressure to improve achievement for all students, administrators are likely to conclude that the PDS model is too limited to make the progress required by federal and state mandates. Educational leaders must find ways to make rapid and systemwide gains in student achievement in order to avoid sanctions and negative publicity.

If a partnership between a school district and one university holds promise, would a partnership across all of the higher education institutions in a metropolitan area and the city school district be even more promising? Such was the thinking of Gene Harris, superintendent of Columbus, Ohio City Schools, in 2003 when she asked area colleges and universities to form a higher education partnership with the district. Heads of the three private colleges with teacher education programs (Otterbein College, Ohio Dominican University, and Capital University), the local community college (Columbus State Community College), and the flagship state university (the Ohio State University) were 5 of the original 6 institutions that signed a formal agreement to participate in the Higher Education Partnership (HEP). The HEP had a lofty goal; with all of their varying missions, structures, and student populations, the institutions agreed to come together for a common purpose—to narrow the well-documented achievement gap between Columbus Public Schools (CPS) students and their suburban peers.

The HEP received Teacher Quality Enhancement (TQE) funds from the U.S. Office of Education beginning in 2004 to deliver specialized urban teacher preparation and targeted professional development with a focus on culturally responsive math and science instruction at the middle school level. Through improved teacher recruitment and retention efforts, as well as enhanced coursework for

preservice and in-service teachers, the partnership hoped to chip away at the nagging problem of unacceptable student achievement. One important component was an “urban strand” of courses and field experiences that was to be developed collaboratively, taken by individuals who planned to teach in Columbus Public Schools, and designed to enhance coursework already in place at the 5 higher education institutions.

Not surprisingly, the partners determined that it made sense to begin with an introductory course that included a field experience. What was more surprising, not to mention gratifying, was the non-territorial approach taken by the higher education representatives. A committee representing the 5 higher education partners and the Columbus City Schools was charged with the responsibility of preparing *Introduction to Urban Education*, a course that would receive transfer credit at any of our institutions. The course would be piloted at Columbus State Community College and team-taught by a Columbus Public Schools middle school teacher and a teacher educator from one of the 4-year institutions. Course meetings were scheduled in the evenings and field hour requirements were held to a minimum in order to allow non-traditional students to participate. Higher education partners had determined that daytime course schedules at their respective institutions were barriers for many adults with work and family obligations who would otherwise be suitable prospects for urban teaching. This project afforded us the opportunity to eliminate this barrier and, as a result, attract more diverse candidates.

Grounding *Introduction to Urban Education* in the Professional Literature

During six, 2-hour planning sessions held across the 2005–2006 academic year, representatives from the partner institutions were able to articulate commonalities across teacher education programs. We agreed that candidates enter teacher education programs with thousands of hours spent in classrooms and that we have to make them aware of subconscious assumptions about subject matter, teaching, learning, and the purpose of schooling through coursework and field experiences. We hoped to challenge some or all of these assumptions and to encourage critical reflection. As Weiner (2006) said, the ability to reflect is “valuable for all teachers but it is essential for urban teachers, who are faced with the most morally and politically complex decisions” (p. 19). We identified four themes (Understanding Self, Understanding the Learner, Understanding the Context, and Understanding the Profession) that were central to existing introductory-level courses. What did we need to add to the first course in the “urban strand” to underscore the urban focus? We searched the professional literature to find innovative ideas and promising practices in urban teacher preparation.

Understanding Self

In order to understand others, you need to understand yourself. A corollary of this statement is that, in order to understand individuals from other cultures, you first need to understand your own cultural identity. Narrative inquiry and reflection promote self-understanding in preservice candidates.

Clandinin and Connelly (2004) place autobiography at the personal end of the personal–social continuum of narrative inquiry. Autobiography should transcend storytelling; in order to do so, it must move out of a private space and into a public space. Introspection is important; however, there is reason to believe that analysis is fostered through interaction. Therefore, it is necessary but insufficient to write one’s “story” in journals or reflective assignments. Excerpts, critical incidents, or entire autobiographies must be shared. The more diverse and divergent the voices in the community, the more participants will learn from one another.

However, teacher educators must be mindful of the difficulties implicit in carrying on conversations that challenge cherished beliefs or unexamined assumptions and world views. As candidates think about their personal histories, they need to become conscious of the inequalities that exist within society. Obidah and Howard (2005) concluded that teacher educators may be forced into their “uncomfort” zones when biases, prejudices, or emotionally charged opinions surface in

communities of practice. Teacher educators must listen for and react to silence not just words in their classrooms (Mazzei, 2003). Fox (2006) provides a powerful rationale for confronting the topic of race head on in the academy and demonstrates how to engage students in difficult conversations.

It is a widely accepted notion that reflection should be part of every teacher education program. What does it mean to be reflective? Is reflection a “teachable” skill? Hatton and Smith (1994) conclude that though there are no simple answers to these questions, “a powerful strategy for fostering reflective action is to engage with another person in a way which encourages talking with, questioning, and even confronting the trusted other...” (p. 15). Mentors and supervisors can play a powerful role not only by requiring reflective thinking in candidates but also by modeling reflection for them.

Understanding the Learner

Teacher education candidates are likely to come from backgrounds that are very different than those of the youngsters they will be teaching. Rebecca Goldstein (2004) challenges her readers to separate fact from fiction and to recognize the nuances when answering the question: Who are our urban students and what makes them so “different”? In order to move beyond a simplistic answer to this complex question, candidates need direct experience in urban settings. Banks et al. (2005) argue that teachers need to know “how to inquire into the backgrounds of their students so that they can connect what they learn to their instructional decision making, in a sense becoming anthropologists who explicitly seek to understand their students’ cultural practices” (p. 243).

Cultural immersion experiences that ask candidates to move outside of familiar territory (whether for brief or extended time periods) have proved to be effective ways to develop positive dispositions in candidates (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005). Placements in nonschool, community-based settings are likely to challenge initial beliefs about urban children and their families if candidates prepare for them by doing some reading in advance and have an opportunity to talk about what they have learned. Obidah and Howard (2005) argue convincingly that “Overall, teacher candidates and beginning teachers know little about the histories and cultures of varying groups in the United States and the discrimination and disenfranchisement that they have encountered” (p. 252). Therefore, before or during these immersion experiences, it is incumbent upon instructors to provide candidates with background information.

In field experiences, we need to make privilege visible to our candidates, even if it means entering into that “uncomfort” zone. Leland and Harste (2005) describe an interesting assignment that encourages candidates to compare their personal histories with those of their students. They asked candidates in an urban teaching cohort to write a personal memoir and to select one student in the field setting to do so as well. “We then asked our students to analyze the two memoirs in terms of the evidence of privilege in each one” (p. 71). While candidates described in this article sometimes reacted defensively to the assignment, it did cause many to “interrogate their underlying assumption that poor people deserve the problems they have” (p. 62).

Understanding the Context

What makes an urban setting different than a rural or suburban setting? Kincheloe (2004) identifies the following distinguishing characteristics: 1) Schools are located in densely populated areas with ethnic, racial, religious, and linguistic diversity as well as significant numbers of families who fall below the poverty line; 2) schools and school districts tend to be large, bureaucratic, and politicized; 3) students within urban areas are likely to be mobile (as are teachers and administrators); 4) teachers are unlikely to live in the communities in which they work; and 5) districts face challenging transportation issues.

Community mapping (Sears, 1998) is a technique that helps candidates develop a better understanding of urban neighborhoods. Participants walk around the area surrounding a school, take photographs, interview residents or individuals who live or work in the community, look at local newspapers, and visit police stations, fire stations, religious institutions, and community centers. Through systematic data gathering, candidates identify resources and increase their awareness of physical and structural challenges that manifest themselves as social problems.

Marble (1997) used a school “portrait” assignment to help preservice teachers gain an appreciation for how complex it can be to understand the context of even one school. It was an open-ended assignment that asked individuals to work together in collaborative groups to prepare and present an investigation on their school. Groups had to define their own projects. Marble included the following exemplars in his article: one group that focused on student perspectives; a second that began with an external viewpoint on school reform; and a third that looked at teachers’ implementation of new teaching strategies. Marble concluded that “regardless of approach, all of the candidates had to wrestle with appropriate and context-sensitive ways to share their findings with school personnel. They came to see the school not as one-dimensional but as an extremely complex institution” (p. 63).

Understanding the Profession

There is theoretical as well as empirical evidence to support the conclusion that general characteristics associated with effective teaching are necessary but insufficient for preparing successful urban educators, and that urban teacher education programs need to be mindful of the tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy (Delpit, 1999; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1997). These tenets include high expectations, a positive perspective on parents and families, cultural sensitivity, use of methods that encourage active learning, and sociopolitical awareness.

Preservice candidates committed to working in urban settings need to ground their work in the ethical dimension of teaching (Strom, 1989). Ladson-Billings (2001) describes how teachers can be encouraged to develop sociopolitical consciousness in themselves and in their students. Culturally responsive teachers, according to Ladson-Billings, promote this consciousness through knowledge of the larger school-community-nation-world context, a strong sense of civic responsibility, a desire to provide experiences that stimulate their students to think about the broader social context, and a realization that their well-being is intimately tied to the progress their students make. Therefore, a desire for social justice should be a key disposition for those entering the teaching profession, particularly for those who choose to work in urban schools. The technical aspects of teaching matter little if this underlying principle is forgotten.

What type of person is most likely to be a culturally responsive educator? Haberman (1995, 1996), based on thousands of interviews with and observations of the 5–8% of teachers in urban school districts who are deemed to be highly effective by virtue of student performance, peer review, supervisory evaluations, and self-assessment, concluded that there are definable traits that characterize “star teachers.” He argues that star teachers in urban schools demonstrate persistence, a protective stance toward learners and learning, a positive attitude toward students, a desire to continue to improve, a sense of efficacy, resourcefulness (and the ability to avoid burnout), and an acceptance of human fallibility in themselves and others.

Integration of Central Themes into Course Design

After a thorough review of the professional literature, the design committee determined that there was no “right” answer to the question of how best to prepare teachers for urban classrooms and that *Introduction to Urban Education* had to be conceptualized as a work in progress. We concluded that it is important for the college/university supervisors, mentor teachers, and candidates to work together to develop their own answers to what works best. While we anticipated that the paths taken would be unique to the individuals involved, we did have a common destination: culturally responsive pedagogy. Star teachers who are culturally responsive do not fall into the trap of the “pedagogy of poverty” and are likely, despite difficult circumstances, to generate positive energy in their classrooms and their buildings (Haberman, 1991). We explicitly included the tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy and star teacher traits in classroom discussion, readings, and field assignments.

Method

Purpose of the Study

The first iteration of *Introduction to Urban Education* was conceptualized as a design experiment. Design studies in education “involve orchestrating all aspects of a period of daily life in classrooms” (Brown, 1992, p. 141). Data collected on curriculum, instruction, and assessment across the term would inform planning not only for the introductory course but for all courses in the strand. The design experiment focused on two research questions:

- 1) Can an introductory course focused on culturally responsive pedagogy (Delpit, 1999; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1997) and “star teacher” attributes (Haberman, 1995, 1996) help preservice candidates to think critically about the challenges and possibilities that exist within urban schools?
- 2) Will preservice candidates be able to translate what they learn from class activities into culturally responsive behaviors in their first field assignments?

Instructors

The authors agreed to coteach *Introduction to Urban Education*. We were a study in contrasts: Harriet—a Caucasian, middle-aged female, a product of private schools and Ivy League universities, with 7 years of teaching experience in an affluent New York suburb and 25 years in teacher education at a small, church-related college; and Isha—an African American, 29-year-old female, a product of Columbus City Schools and The Ohio State University, with 7 years of work in the district (5 years as a middle school science teacher and 2 years as a teacher assigned to the TQE project).

By taking on the coteaching assignment, we were embarking into uncharted territory. Nevin, Thousand, and Villa (2009), in their review of the professional literature, found that empirical studies of coteaching in teacher education are “relatively sparse” (p. 572). There is some evidence that collaborative teaching improves practice for each of the coteachers. Questions about the impact of coteaching on student learning in particular, or on teacher education reform in general, are still unanswered.

We met weekly for 10 weeks prior to the first class. Every week, Harriet provided material that gave Isha an orientation to the academy in general and teacher education in particular. Isha shared best practices in urban education from Web sites, in-service sessions, and practical

texts; in addition, she brought in magazines and films that portrayed urban youth culture. While the overt agenda was to structure individual class sessions, our real purpose was to get to know each other. Like Jennifer Obidah and Karen Teel (2001), teacher researchers who confronted race and culture in a head-on fashion, we needed to learn each other’s “herstory” (p. 9). We talked about our family and school experiences as well as our teacher preparation programs. Harriet was the 1960s idealist who had participated in civil rights marches and wanted to believe that social and economic inequalities could be addressed through school improvement efforts. Isha was the 1990s realist who had come up through “the system” and was skeptical about the possibility of realizing the promise of democracy for all children in poverty. What we shared in common was a sense of humor and a sincere interest in learning from and with each other.

Participants

The course was open to any individual who was eligible for a TQE-funded scholarship. Scholarships of up to \$5,000 per year were offered to qualified individuals at partner institutions who expressed an interest in teaching mathematics or science at the middle level in Columbus City Schools. We started out with 15 students but lost 3 by the 2nd week due to work and family conflicts, and a 4th at the midterm point because of poor academic performance. The 11 (2 African American females, 2 African American males, 1 African female, 1 Caucasian male, 4 Caucasian females, 1 Hispanic female) were, with one exception, non-traditional students who ranged in age from 30 to 58. Two were instructional aides in Columbus Schools, one was teaching in a charter school under an emergency license, and two were childcare providers. During the first class, we administered the *Teaching in Urban Schools Scale* (Swartz & Bakari, 2007), an assessment device designed to tap “knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools” (p. ii). The class as a whole scored slightly below the mean reported in the manual (Mean = 0.62, SD = 0.14). Individual scores as well as the class mean are reported in Table 1.

Table 1
Performance on Teaching in Urban Schools Scale

Candidate	Total Score
AB	0.67
HB	0.69
JB	0.44
JC	0.53
JG	0.71
SH	0.66
BK	0.55
KN	0.65
KR	0.58
LW	0.50
SW	0.52
Mean	0.59
SD	0.09

Note: Total score represents the proportion of items that a candidate answered correctly.

Course Structure

Course content was framed by the following overarching questions: What are the political, social, and historical forces that shape educational institutions? What current standards, legislation, and code of ethics guide the work of teachers? Who are the students that populate our schools and how can teachers address the needs of all learners? How do culture and community impact teaching and learning? How does one become socialized in this profession? Can I make a significant contribution to the profession? Can I be an effective urban teacher?

The class met for 3 hours 1 night per week over a 10-week period. Note that 2 of the 3 hours were dedicated to the six course topics identified by the Ohio Board of Regents as essential for introduction to education courses (Standards-Based Education, Professionalism, Diversity, Democratic Issues/Social Justice, Curriculum and Instruction, and Legal/Organizational Issues). Each topic was covered by a student team one week and a professional panel the following week. Candidates were divided into collaborative learning groups, assigned one of the themes, provided with relevant Web links, and given the task of putting together a 45–60 minute lesson on their topic. Panels composed of 3 or more Columbus Public Schools administrators, teacher leaders, and union representatives were given 60 minutes to talk about the district’s approach to each of the six topics; students could ask panel members questions and engage them in extended conversations. The remaining hour was focused on activities that underscored the tenets of culturally responsive teaching and allowed candidates to make connections between field observations and course content.

In the syllabus, we indicated that candidates should try to schedule 20–25 clock hours in a Columbus middle school. During the school-based field experience, candidates were expected to learn about classroom routines, take over some nonteaching duties, tutor individual students, or work with small groups. Isha, in her role as TQE mentor coordinator, arranged the school-based placements. Mentors were exemplary math and science teachers who had been selected to work not only with preservice candidates but also with teachers in their buildings who had between 2 and 5 years of experience and were interested in improving their practice. Mentors received intensive training in ten sessions across the academic year on topics that ranged from instructional improvement (understanding the young adolescent, culturally responsive pedagogy, differentiation, classroom management), to personal and professional development (teacher career development, stress management), to specific mentoring skills (cognitive coaching, teacher leadership, communication styles).

An additional 20–25 hours were spent working in an afterschool or weekend program that served urban young adolescents. Candidates were given a list of agencies throughout the metropolitan area that welcomed volunteers with a description of programs offered, application procedures, and contact information. Working in educational or recreational settings, they recorded differences between behaviors observed in the community versus the school setting and capitalized on opportunities to form relationships with one or more of the young adolescents they encountered.

Key Assessments

Response paper. Candidates located examples of culturally responsive teaching behaviors in *Holler If You Hear Me* (Michie, 1999), a 1st-year teacher’s memoir. They were asked to complete a reading guide that listed the five tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy (high expectations, positive perspective on parents, cultural sensitivity, promoting active learning,

and sociopolitical awareness) with two to four indicators per tenet. For example, the following indicators were listed under “High Expectations”: 1) *The teacher presumes that all students are capable of being educated*; and 2) *the teacher gives students clear messages about what it means to be successful in his classroom*. Candidates read the memoir, found examples of the indicators, and noted page numbers on the guide. In small groups, they shared their findings with one another. Each candidate was then asked to write his or her own response paper, addressing the tenets by using examples from the Michie memoir.

Community mapping. After completing a community mapping exercise in the neighborhood surrounding the school in which they had been placed, candidates were asked to respond in writing to the following prompt: *What information did you acquire that you could use if you were planning instruction for young adolescents who lived in this community? Can you see ways that you could make linkages between school and community?*

Participant observation in field settings. Using a structured protocol, candidates observed young adolescents in school and community settings and described their physical, emotional, social, and cognitive characteristics. We gave candidates a handout that outlined developmental characteristics of young adolescents (Van Hoose, Strahan, & L’Esperance, 2002) and required them to find specific examples of these characteristics in middle school youngsters encountered in their field settings. We also gave them a handout, entitled “Culture of Their Daily Lives,” that asked specific questions about language, fashion, music, religion/spirituality, food, media/technology, and recreation/leisure. They were to observe, interview, and conduct research in order to answer questions related to these topics.

Star teacher assignment. Candidates looked for “star teacher” attributes in their mentor teachers and jotted down anecdotes that provided direct or indirect evidence of the presence or absence of one or more of these attributes.

Group project. Each of the six course topics was assigned to a group of 3 to 5 candidates. Groups taught a 45–60 minute lesson that highlighted key aspects of the topics. Groups were expected to incorporate PowerPoint slides, a handout, and a follow-up activity. Each member of a group was assessed by the other members for his/her contributions; this feedback, in combination with the quality of the final product, factored into the project grade.

Synthesis paper. At the end of the course, candidates were asked to respond to the following prompt: *Read and react to Urban Teaching: The Essentials (Weiner, 2006). Reviewing everything that you have learned in this course, what valid points does the author make? What ideas would you debate with her? You can consider this assignment to be your final examination for the course. Demonstrate what you have learned from assigned readings, class discussions, student and expert panel presentations, and field experiences.*

Data Sources

In addition to key assessments, data sources included instructors’ field notes and mentor teacher observations/ratings. The committee took three of the five tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy (Delpit, 1999; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1997) and translated them into a rubric that could be used both as a way to communicate expectations and as a tool to assess candidate performance in field settings. The following categories, with behavioral descriptors of exemplary, adequate, and substandard performance, were included: high expectations, cultural sensitivity, and use of methods that encourage active learning.

Data Analysis

We used both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods. Descriptive statistics on key assessments and field evaluation ratings were computed for the 11 candidates. However, we anticipated that there would be little that we could glean “from the numbers” that would inform future course design. By coding our field notes and candidates’ final synthesis papers using the four themes identified by the committee and grounded in the professional literature (understanding self, learners, context, and the profession), we were able to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the impact of specific design elements on candidate learning.

Findings

Descriptive statistics on the six key assessments are provided in Table 2. Acceptable ratings indicated that an assignment addressed all required elements, included thorough explanations and/or salient examples, and was free of mechanical errors. Exemplary ratings meant that submissions were insightful as well as thorough. One candidate distinguished herself by earning exemplary ratings on all six assessments; in contrast, another candidate, because his work was either late or incomplete, had marginal ratings on four of the six. While there was variability in the quality across individuals and assignments, in general, candidates were able to demonstrate competence on the six assessments.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics on Key Assessments

Assessment	Possible Points	Obtained Range	M	SD
Michie guide	10	4–10	8.09	1.58
Field observation	10	7–10	8.82	0.96
Star teacher interview	10	4–10	8.73	1.79
Weiner summative essay	20	14–20	16.64	1.80
Community mapping	10	6–10	8.82	1.33
Group presentation	40	33–38	36.00	1.55

Table 3 shows frequency distributions of ratings on field evaluations. Nine of the 11 candidates were judged by mentor teachers to be performing at exemplary or expected levels on all three tenets. It is noteworthy that the individual who earned an “Unsatisfactory” on “Cultural Sensitivity” also had the lowest score in the class on the *Teaching in Urban Schools* measure administered at the beginning of the course. One young woman (BK) had “Marginal” ratings on all three criteria. She seemed to have a particularly hard time relating to urban adolescents; her own reflections corroborate the mentor ratings (see BK excerpt in *Understanding Self: Getting into the “Uncomfort Zone”*).

Table 3
Frequencies: Field Evaluation Ratings

Criterion	Description	Ratings ^a			
		4	3	2	1
High expectations	Committed to helping all young adolescents develop confidence and competence	9	1	1	0
Cultural sensitivity	Seeks out background information about cultures and communities in order to enhance interactions	7	2	1	1
Active learning	Encourages young adolescents to be active participants in teaching, tutoring, or recreational contexts	9	1	1	0

Note: 4 = Exceeds expectations; 3 = Meets expectations; 2 = Marginal; 1 = Unsatisfactory

^a N=11

Instructor field notes, mentor comments on field evaluations, and candidate work samples were analyzed and coded using the four course themes as categories. Qualitative findings are reported by theme.

Understanding Self: Getting into the “Uncomfort Zone”

We asked the class to respond to reflective prompts in weekly journal assignments. We planned to have candidates share their responses regularly throughout the term in small-group or whole-class activities. Because the class had diverse and divergent voices, we were sure there would be many opportunities for candidates to learn from one another.

Instructors’ field notes from the first class documented the difficulties implicit in carrying on conversations that challenge cherished beliefs or unexamined assumptions and world views. In a fishbowl activity taken from Fox (2006), students were asked to sit either in the outer or inner circle depending on their skin color. The inner circle responded to the question: *What impact does race have on your daily life?* Those in the outer circle were asked to be silent observers. We intended to have the circles switch roles after 15 minutes and started with the students of color in the inner circle. What we had not anticipated was the conflict that would arise between an African American male and a Somali female. The animosity was palpable, and Caucasian students in the outer circle looked on in stunned silence. As instructors, we needed to decide whether to intercede. We reminded participants about the “rules” of civil discourse, but we allowed the two to share their perspectives. Once they finished speaking, other candidates of color told their stories. One woman in her late 20s talked about taunts experienced in middle school and high school because she was viewed as “yellow” (or light-skinned) and, therefore, not part of the African American community. A young African woman, still an adolescent, described how Caucasian teachers expected less of her because of her dark skin, even though she consistently earned good grades and all members of her immediate family were college educated.

After 45 minutes, Caucasian students took their place in the inner circle. We heard from a young man who felt more comfortable in a predominantly African American high school than he did when his parents moved him to a Caucasian suburban community. We also heard from

middle-aged as well as young adults who commented about the fact that they had not really thought about race very much, certainly not about their own racial identity.

We landed in the “uncomfort zone” described by Obidah and Howard (2005) very quickly. We wanted students to be able to share their experiences but needed to ensure that individuals with limited English skills were not overwhelmed by their more verbally facile peers. We had to interpret silence (Mazzei, 2003) not just words to gauge the emotional temperature in the room and encourage the more reticent students to engage in the discussion. That first class was both exhausting and exhilarating. It certainly set the stage for the rest of the term.

Understanding the Learner: Connecting to Middle School Young Adolescents

Candidates were to learn about intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and moral development through careful observation. One candidate came to the realization that urban adolescents posed unique challenges to adults.

At first, I did not think that going to another school was important. (Note: Candidate is an instructional assistant in a Columbus elementary building). However, I quickly found the differences between elementary and middle schools. A small child is moldable, easily swayed and changed. The adolescent is a whole different being. They take exception to almost everything an adult says to them. I learned that teaching an adolescent involves different approaches and that all children are reachable if you care enough to dig your way in. I feel that to be an effective middle school educator you have to have real connection with your students. You can not only go through the motions or they will realize you are fake. And then watch out! (KN, Caucasian, female, non-traditional student)

Establishing relationships was easier for some than for others. KR (Caucasian, female, non-traditional student) expressed frustration in her synthesis paper.

I wish that I could say that I have seen powerful examples of being able to learn from students in my field experience or in my community setting... But I cannot say that I have. I attempted in a small way to connect with the students; nevertheless, it is difficult since often you are trying to get them do something they do not want to do—work or study.

Candidates were struck by the developmental variability among the students and often taken aback by middle school youth culture. Instructor field notes recorded frequent discussions of candidates’ own experiences as young adolescents. Many concluded that language and actions that were unacceptable in their youth might be the norm for the students they encountered.

This was true for the youngest as well as the oldest class participants. In fact, BK (African, female, traditional student) found herself particularly “out of synch” with urban middle school students. She was taken aback by students in her school setting. She talked in class about being called “an Oreo” (assumedly because she was perceived to be an African American woman speaking and carrying herself in a Caucasian manner). Her classroom conversation and written reflections focused on students’ disrespect for adults. On the final evaluation form, TR (African American, female, mentor teacher), described BK’s interactions with students in the following manner:

There was an obvious wall between her and the students. BK did express to me some preconceived negative behavioral views that she held. For example, she was told that inner city kids were hard to teach and would display inappropriate behaviors.

Understanding the Context: Becoming a Novice Anthropologist

Candidates were required to look systematically at physical and social aspects of communities that surrounded the schools to which they had been assigned. They described abandoned dwellings, empty storefronts, and other signs of economic distress. KN (Caucasian, female, non-traditional student) observed:

There was a “park” located within walking distance of the school. The area of the park was approximately 100 feet wide by a length of 1½ city blocks. While this may sound large, it was not. The area was bordered by two residential streets. The park area had trees and an uneven grassy area, caused by the higher level of one of the bordering streets. There was very little for any child to do at this park. It was not a good place to run, ride a bike, or even play in since the ground was uneven.... Some things that I learned while I was walking around this neighborhood included that the students had few opportunities on which to focus their efforts, creativity, and strengths. Thus, their attempts at creativity show up in the surrounding area as graffiti. One can only wonder as to what the surrounding community would be like with extensive resources for the youth.

Walking around the community surrounding her school, SH (Caucasian, female, non-traditional student) noted the presence of new immigrant groups in Columbus and was reminded of her ethnocentric response when her neighborhood began to change:

I live on the west side of Columbus where it is cheaper and still on the bus line. At some point, I noticed more and more people wearing headdresses or with a red dot on their foreheads. A Mexican family moved into the apartment next to mine with 12 people—6 adults and 6 kids. I felt surrounded and was unsure how to react. My first thought was, “For heaven’s sake, speak English!” I wanted to reject the foreign culture and didn’t want to hear Spanish, which is probably exactly how they felt about American culture.

Candidates became keenly aware of the fact that school culture is likely to mirror the culture of the community. Urban ills (violence, sense of futility, transience, overcrowding, and inadequate resources) have a significant impact on the lives of teachers and their students. SW (Hispanic, female, non-traditional student) drew the conclusion in her final synthesis paper that teachers in high-poverty schools face unique challenges:

Sometimes teachers need to help students with their supplies and clothing because parents do not have enough money to buy them. There is a direct connection between community and school. If the community is poor that means that the school is poor.

Disrespectful and volatile behaviors perplexed and disturbed candidates:

Students who really weren’t into learning generally would come to class after the tardy bell had rung. They would continue to disrupt class with constant talking to classmates or with comments directed at the teacher. Or instead, they would put their heads down on the desk and sleep the class

away. How do you motivate students who choose not to challenge themselves? (JB, African American, male, non-traditional student)

He kept telling me that his mom would beat me up or take care of me. Mr. A. told him to sit down. The child argued and then accused the teacher of cussing at him. On that day, I was disheartened and knew that I had definitely hit the brick wall that many educators face. (KN, Caucasian, female, non-traditional student)

AB (African American, female, non-traditional student) felt the negative energy in her building and reflected on it in her final synthesis paper:

I have walked down the hallways of my school and listened in the staff lounge. I've heard harsh comments about students that were blatantly blurted out during a typical staff lunch and wondered what may have happened to cause an educator to respond in this manner.

Understanding the Profession: Looking Through the CRP Lens

There is consensus around the notion that teachers should be able to translate knowledge about themselves, their students, and the larger social and political forces that shape our institutions into effective teaching practices (Banks, Cochran-Smith, Moll, Richert et al., 2005). *Holler If You Hear Me: The Education of a Teacher and His Students*, a memoir by Greg Michie (1999) about his early years as a middle school teacher in Chicago schools, was assigned as a springboard for discussion about what culturally responsive teaching might look in a novice teacher's classroom. In reflective journal entries, class participants applauded Michie's ability to connect to his students by selecting multicultural texts, using learner-centered strategies, and capitalizing on teachable moments. Michie's "passion for his students," in the words of one candidate, was inspiring. In chapter after chapter, he provided examples of how he worked tirelessly during and after the school day to engage his students.

I am confident that Michie had days that he was frustrated and even angry. However, what I found to be extraordinarily encouraging was how he persevered until he located a common thread that allowed him to build trust... (AB, African American, female, non-traditional student)

Candidates witnessed "star teachers" in their field assignments who, like Michie, persevered. Two candidates recognized that cultural responsiveness translates into a "whatever it takes" attitude toward teaching.

Mrs. D. uses the curriculum guide, but she is able to recognize immediately if the children do not understand the topic. She will try an assortment of activities to help the children understand. (JC, Caucasian, male, non-traditional student)

She spends time during her lunch time and before and after class hours to explain some theory that they did not understand. (SW, Hispanic female, non-traditional student)

One candidate documented her first attempts to be a "star" teacher:

In one of my sessions at the Homework Help Center, a student was struggling to write a complaint letter to the manager about a recent restaurant experience (a required homework assignment). He was struggling because he had never been to a restaurant, not even fast food. I encouraged him to think about his family's meals at home and asked him probing questions about things that could go wrong... He was able to come up with several possible complaints, but it made me realize that everyone does not share some experiences I take for granted. (SH, Caucasian, female, non-traditional student)

As a culminating assignment, *Introduction to Urban Education* candidates were asked to read *Urban Teaching: The Essentials* (Weiner, 2006) and react to the text by comparing the author's ideas with what they heard in student and panel presentations, saw in their school settings, and read about in other readings. Weiner provides a candid, often critical, view of urban schools, with particular attention paid to New York City schools. Did their impressions match up with those expressed by the author?

Weiner seems to be very negative toward administration and other staff members in inner city schools. I got the feeling that she is preparing new teachers to fight a war. She made it seem like colleagues would not be any more help than administrators would...My experience this quarter seemed to be a different scenario altogether. The teachers were very helpful even before they knew I was just a student...The principal was accessible to the staff...The administration and staff appeared to support one another. (JG, Caucasian, female, non-traditional student)

Indifference toward students on the part of many urban educators, while observed by some of the candidates and highlighted in the Wiener text, might as easily be found in suburban districts, according to one participant.

Rather than analyzing what the school and teachers can do differently to help underachieving students succeed, too many teachers say "these kids" can't learn because "these families don't care." I agree with Weiner on this. However, I can't say that this happens only in urban schools. I have heard this type of comment from a teacher with years of experience and from a brand new teacher in a well-regarded suburban district. Teachers who make these kinds of statements just don't want to put in the extra effort needed to find a way to bring a particular child around. (KB, Caucasian, female, non-traditional student)

Weiner painted a grim picture of the plight of immigrants and English language learners in urban schools. JC, a Caucasian, non-traditional male student, found Weiner's assertion that immigrant populations are "short changed" (p. 9) to be untrue in Columbus.

Before EDUC 210, I would have jumped to the conclusion that a student with limited English skills should not be in regular classes. Thanks to the Diversity Expert Panel and Group Presentation, I learned there are several programs in place not only to help these children while in the classroom but assessments that they have to pass before they enter regular classrooms. I am not saying these programs are perfect, but it is a step in the right direction.

Columbus resources and expertise were showcased across the term by the panels. One participant noted the stark contrast between district schools and the inner-city charter school in which she taught.

Urban schools offer inadequate school supplies and resources ... I'll pause right here to elaborate from personal experience. Teaching at Confusing Academy has confirmed this statement for me and several other points Weiner has elaborated on throughout the chapters of her book. When I first arrived at Confusing Academy I was given no planning time to prepare myself for the class I was to be teaching. I started off being told I was assigned to 6th grade English only to be told 1 week later I would be placed in the 1st grade. When I came into the 1st grade class there were no books, no supplemental materials, no school supplies, no fun posters, and no computer! My thoughts were: TEACH! TEACH WHAT? WITH WHAT? (HB, African American, female, non-traditional student)

Looking Back and Looking Forward

As teacher educators, we wanted to instill a sense of efficacy that would counterbalance our natural tendency “to notice and attend to those negative things in our environment that bother us, challenge the status quo or present a perceived threat” (Jongewaard, 2004, p. 15). We emphasized reflection because we believed that “Reflective practitioners understand the challenge and appreciate the complexity. They recognize and appreciate the stacked odds. Nevertheless, reflective teachers start with the possible” (Jongewaard, 2004, p. 17).

Based on data collected during exit conferences and from online course evaluations, participants felt that the course, particularly the field component, had been a positive learning experience. Though all of our candidates indicated that they wanted to continue in a teacher education program, we had serious reservations about one (who happened to be the individual who had the lowest score on the *Teaching in Urban Schools Scale* at the beginning of the course) and concerns about several others. The candidates about whom we felt least comfortable were either unwilling or unable to look carefully or critically at their own actions and reactions. They often came up with simplistic explanations for complex phenomena or were unaware of contradictions that surfaced in their written reflections and verbal interchanges. In addition to assessments completed by mentor teachers, we shared our impressions, both orally and in writing during exit conferences; written records would follow candidates as they transferred from the community college to a 4-year institution. We used the tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy as a framework for providing feedback.

Encouraged by the positive student response to the course, but disappointed by the fact that we had ended up with a small number of candidates who we felt had the potential to be strong urban teachers, we asked ourselves what we could do differently in the future. Could we predict who our future “star” teachers would be before they began the course? Unfortunately, we couldn’t. Class activities and field requirements allowed us to identify promising candidates, but background variables (including age, ability, experience, and ethnicity) were not good predictors of success. We ended up with more questions than answers about how to recruit individuals with the “right stuff” for urban schools.

Our experience in this first course taught us that it is possible to transcend institutional boundaries. Greater trust and cooperation among higher education partners led to a cross-institutional program for in-service Columbus teachers who wish to add math or science

middle-level licensure. In addition, committee members who had been instrumental in designing the first course requested that we establish a professional learning community for individuals interested in enhancing their understanding of urban education. We launched this learning community during the 2008–2009 academic year; 10 college/university faculty and supervisors, 6 Columbus City schools faculty and administrators, and 6 preservice candidates participated in monthly meetings. Participants have expressed an interest in continuing the learning community, despite the fact that funds are no longer available to purchase reading materials or to cover refreshments.

In order to prepare teachers to work effectively in an urban district, teacher educators should understand how historical, sociological, and political forces play out at the local level. As several of our students pointed out to us in their final papers, cities are as different from one another as they are from suburbs or small towns. The term *urban* has a different meaning in Columbus, Ohio, than it does in New York, Chicago, or even Cincinnati and Cleveland, cities in the same state. Because cities are dynamic places and change continually, the only way to understand the local context is to stay involved and establish a credible presence within the school district. The TQE project has given the higher education partners a powerful opportunity to redesign teacher preparation in collaboration with one another and with a large urban school district.

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