



Faculty and Student Collaboration: Teaching and Learning in Two Special Education Courses

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Abstract

Although there is a body of research that supports collaboration and professional development for university and in-service teacher preparation programs, the type of program has been debated for years [1]. Research indicates that these early practice teaching experiences help pre-service teachers clarify their approaches to teaching and help to solidify their beliefs about teaching. The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of a peer collaboration between teacher candidates during a methods class in special education. The goal was to determine if the collaboration increased the candidates' learning of how to effectively incorporate the Danielson model when designing lessons and presentations that used technology. We were especially interested in the model because it is used by numerous school districts for teaching and teacher evaluation and we wanted our teacher candidates to have multiple opportunities to learn and use the model. The design provided the opportunity for the students from two different sections of the same course who have different majors, grade certifications, and faculty to work together. One class was largely comprised of candidates preparing to be teachers in grades 7-12 and the second class was predominantly candidates preparing to be elementary teachers K-6 grades. The underlying premise was based on the fact that positive learning experiences do not just happen as a matter of luck or of spending prolonged time with other education students. Those responsible for teaching within them must attend carefully to building a culture that supports and sustains effective group problem solving which presents curricular and instructional issues that in some respects are unique to creating parallel conditions in in-service teacher education that support collaboration as an essential component of school reform [2]. The participants provided feedback through questionnaires, reflections, and individual exit interviews. In addition to the insights gained by the pre-service teachers, the authors feel that the impact on the two faculty members was substantial and resulted in a more favorable consideration of using integrated instruction across course collaboration activities to improve teacher candidates planning and differentiation in lesson plans. Implications of this study for teacher education programs will be further explored and discussed.

[1] Hammond-Darling, L. (1995) *Holmes Group, Tomorrow's Schools of Education*. Darling-Hammond, L. 1997a. *Doing what matters most: Investing in quality teaching*. National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.

[2] Bullough, Robert Jr., Clark, D. C., Wentworth, N. & J. M. H. (2001). *Students cohorts, school rhythms, and teacher education*. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 28(2), 97.